

AN EYE FOR AN EYE



ANTHONY TROLLOPE

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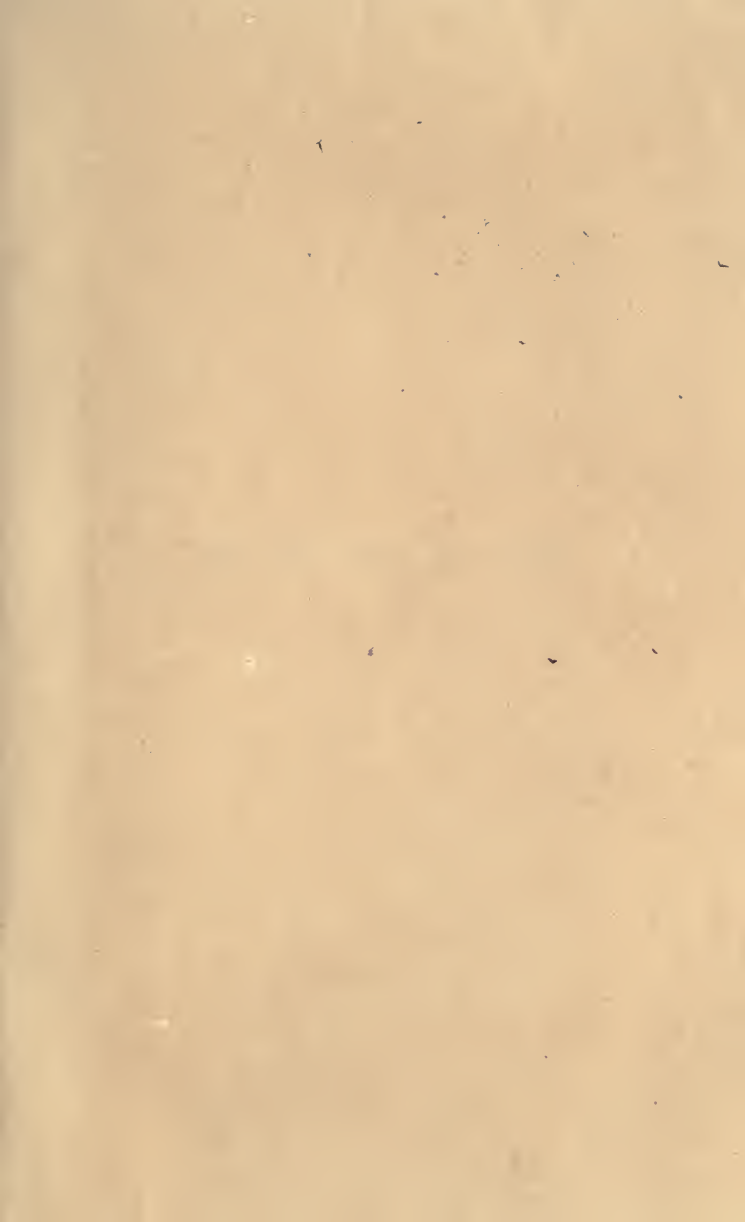
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# AN EYE FOR AN EYE

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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# AN EYE FOR AN EYE.

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## INTRODUCTION.

At a private asylum in the west of England there lives, and has lived for some years past, an unfortunate lady, as to whom there has long since ceased to be any hope that she should ever live elsewhere. Indeed there is no one left belonging to her by whom the indulgence of such a hope on her behalf could be cherished. Friends she has none ; and her own condition is such, that she recks nothing of confinement and does not even sigh for release. And yet her mind is ever at work,—as is doubtless always the case with the insane. She has present to her, apparently in every waking moment of her existence, an object of intense interest, and at

that she works with a constancy which never wearies herself, however fatiguing it may be to those who are near her. She is ever justifying some past action of her life. "An eye for an eye," she says, "and a tooth for a tooth. Is it not the law?" And these words she will repeat daily, almost from morn till night.

It has been said that this poor lady has no friends. Friends who would be anxious for her recovery, who would care to see her even in her wretched condition, who might try to soothe her harassed heart with words of love, she has none. Such is her condition now, and her temperament, that it may be doubted whether any words of love, however tender, could be efficacious with her. She is always demanding justification, and as those who are around her never thwart her she has probably all the solace which kindness could give her.

But, though she has no friends—none who love her,—she has all the material comfort which friendship or even love could supply.

All that money can do to lessen her misery, is done. The house in which she lives is surrounded by soft lawns and secluded groves. It has been prepared altogether for the wealthy, and is furnished with every luxury which it may be within the power of a maniac to enjoy. This lady has her own woman to attend her; and the woman, though stout and masterful, is gentle in language and kind in treatment. "An eye for an eye, ma'am. Oh, certainly. That is the law. An eye for an eye, no doubt." This formula she will repeat a dozen times a day—ay, a dozen dozen times, till the wonder is that she also should not be mad.

The reader need not fear that he is to be asked to loiter within the precincts of an asylum for the insane. Of this abode of wretchedness no word more shall be said; but the story shall be told of the lady who dwelt there,—the story of her life till madness placed her within those walls. That story was known to none at the establishment but to him who was its head.

Others there, who were cognisant of the condition of the various patients, only knew that from quarter to quarter the charges for this poor lady's custody were defrayed by the Earl of Scroope.

## CHAPTER I.

### SCROOPE MANOR.

SOME years ago, it matters not how many, the old Earl of Scroope lived at Scroope Manor in Dorsetshire. The house was an Elizabethan structure of some pretensions, but of no fame. It was not known to sight-seers, as are so many of the residences of our nobility and country gentlemen. No days in the week were appointed for visiting its glories, nor was the housekeeper supposed to have a good thing in perquisites from showing it. It was a large brick building facing on to the village street,—facing the village, if the hall-door of a house be the main characteristic of its face; but with a front on to its own grounds from which opened the windows of the chief apartments. The

village of Scroope consisted of a straggling street a mile in length, with the church and parsonage at one end, and the Manor-house almost at the other. But the church stood within the park; and on that side of the street, for more than half its length, the high, gloomy wall of the Earl's domain stretched along in face of the publicans, bakers, grocers, two butchers, and retired private residents whose almost contiguous houses made Scroope itself seem to be more than a village to strangers. Close to the Manor and again near to the church, some favoured few had been allowed to build houses and to cultivate small gardens taken, as it were, in notches out of the Manor grounds; but these tenements must have been built at a time in which landowners were very much less jealous than they are now of such encroachments from their humbler neighbours.

The park itself was large, and the appendages to it such as were fit for an Earl's establishment;—but there was little about it that was

attractive. The land lay flat, and the timber, which was very plentiful, had not been made to group itself in picturesque forms. There was the Manor wood, containing some five hundred acres, lying beyond the church and far back from the road, intersected with so-called drives, which were unfit for any wheels but those of timber waggons;—and round the whole park there was a broad belt of trees. Here and there about the large enclosed spaces there stood solitary oaks, in which the old Earl took pride; but at Scroope Manor there was none of that finished landscape beauty of which the owners of “places” in England are so justly proud.

The house was large, and the rooms were grand and spacious. There was an enormous hall into one corner of which the front door opened. There was a vast library filled with old books which no one ever touched,—huge volumes of antiquated and now all but useless theology, and folio editions of the least known



classics,—such as men now never read. Not a book had been added to it since the commencement of the century, and it may almost be said that no book had been drawn from its shelves for real use during the same period. There was a suite of rooms,—a salon with two withdrawing rooms which now were never opened. The big dining-room was used occasionally, as, in accordance with the traditions of the family, dinner was served there whenever there were guests at the Manor. Guests, indeed, at Scroope Manor were not very frequent;—but Lady Scroope did occasionally have a friend or two to stay with her; and at long intervals the country clergymen and neighbouring squires were asked, with their wives, to dinner. When the Earl and his Countess were alone they used a small breakfast parlour, and between this and the big dining-room there was the little chamber in which the Countess usually lived. The Earl's own room was at the back, or if the reader pleases, front of the house, near the door



leading into the street, and was, of all rooms in the house, the gloomiest.

The atmosphere of the whole place was gloomy. There were none of those charms of modern creation which now make the mansions of the wealthy among us bright and joyous. There was not a billiard table in the house. There was no conservatory nearer than the large old-fashioned greenhouse, which stood away by the kitchen garden and which seemed to belong exclusively to the gardener. The papers on the walls were dark and sombre. The mirrors were small and lustreless. The carpets were old and dingy. The windows did not open on to the terrace. The furniture was hardly ancient, but yet antiquated and uncomfortable. Throughout the house, and indeed throughout the estate, there was sufficient evidence of wealth; and there certainly was no evidence of parsimony; but at Scroope Manor money seemed never to have produced luxury. The household was very large. There

was a butler, and a housekeeper, and various footmen, and a cook with large wages, and maidens in tribes to wait upon each other, and a colony of gardeners, and a coachman, and a head-groom, and under-grooms. All these lived well under the old Earl, and knew the value of their privileges. There was much to get, and almost nothing to do. A servant might live for ever at Scroope Manor,—if only sufficiently submissive to Mrs. Bunce the housekeeper. There was certainly no parsimony at the Manor, but the luxurious living of the household was confined to the servants' department.

To a stranger, and perhaps also to the inmates, the idea of gloom about the place was greatly increased by the absence of any garden or lawn near the house. Immediately in front of the mansion, and between it and the park, there ran two broad gravel terraces, one above another; and below these the deer would come and browse. To the left of the house, at nearly

a quarter of a mile distant from it, there was a very large garden indeed,—flower-gardens, and kitchen-gardens, and orchards; all ugly, and old-fashioned, but producing excellent crops in their kind. But they were away, and were not seen. Cut flowers were occasionally brought into the house,—but the place was never filled with flowers as country houses are filled with them now-a-days. No doubt had Lady Scroope wished for more she might have had more.

Scroope itself, though a large village, stood a good deal out of the world. Within the last year or two a railway has been opened, with a Scroope Road Station, not above three miles from the place; but in the old lord's time it was eleven miles from its nearest station, at Dorchester, with which it had communication once a day by an omnibus. Unless a man had business with Scroope nothing would take him there; and very few people had business with Scroope. Now and then a commercial traveller

would visit the place with but faint hopes as to trade. A post-office inspector once in twelve months would call upon plethoric old Mrs. Applejohn, who kept the small shop for stationery, and was known as the postmistress. The two sons of the vicar, Mr. Greenmarsh, would pass backwards and forwards between their father's vicarage and Marlbro' school. And occasionally the men and women of Scroope would make a journey to their county town. But the Earl was told that old Mrs. Brock of the Scroope Arms could not keep the omnibus on the road unless he would subscribe to aid it. Of course he subscribed. If he had been told by his steward to subscribe to keep the cap on Mrs. Brock's head, he would have done so. Twelve pounds a year his Lordship paid towards the omnibus, and Scroope was not absolutely dissevered from the world.

The Earl himself was never seen out of his own domain, except when he attended church. This he did twice every Sunday in the year,

the coachman driving him there in the morning and the head-groom in the afternoon. Throughout the household it was known to be the Earl's request to his servants that they would attend divine service at least once every Sunday. None were taken into service but they who were or who called themselves members of the Church Establishment. It is hardly probable that many dissenters threw away the chance of such promotion on any frivolous pretext of religion. Beyond this request, which, coming from the mouth of Mrs. Bunce, became very imperative, the Earl hardly ever interfered with his domestics. His own valet had attended him for the last thirty years; but, beyond his valet and the butler, he hardly knew the face of one of them. There was a gamekeeper at Scroope Manor, with two under-gamekeepers; and yet, for some years, no one, except the gamekeepers, had ever shot over the lands. Some partridges and a few pheasants were, however, sent into the house when Mrs. Bunce,

moved to wrath, would speak her mind on that subject.

The Earl of Scroope himself was a tall, thin man, something over seventy at the time of which I will now begin to speak. His shoulders were much bent, but otherwise he appeared to be younger than his age. His hair was nearly white, but his eyes were still bright, and the handsome well-cut features of his fine face were not reduced to shapelessness by any of the ravages of time, as is so often the case with men who are infirm as well as old. Were it not for the long and heavy eyebrows, which gave something of severity to his face, and for that painful stoop in his shoulders, he might still have been accounted a handsome man. In youth he had been a very handsome man, and had shone forth in the world, popular, beloved, respected, with all the good things the world could give. The first blow upon him was the death of his wife. That hurt him sorely, but it did not quite crush him. Then his only daughter died



also, just as she became a bride. High as the Lady Blanche Neville had stood herself, she had married almost above her rank, and her father's heart had been full of joy and pride. But she had perished childless,—in child-birth, and again he was hurt almost to death. There was still left to him a son,—a youth indeed thoughtless, lavish, and prone to evil pleasures. But thought would come with years; for almost any lavishness there were means sufficient; and evil pleasures might cease to entice. The young Lord Neville was all that was left to the Earl, and for his heir he paid debts and forgave injuries. The young man would marry and all might be well. Then he found a bride for his boy,—with no wealth, but owning the best blood in the kingdom, beautiful, good, one who might be to him as another daughter. His boy's answer was that he was already married! He had chosen his wife from out of the streets, and offered to the Earl of Scroope as a child to replace the daughter who had gone, a wretched

painted prostitute from France. After that Lord Scroope never again held up his head.

The father would not see his heir,—and never saw him again. As to what money might be needed, the lawyers in London were told to manage that. The Earl himself would give nothing and refuse nothing. When there were debts,—debts for the second time, debts for the third time, the lawyers were instructed to do what in their own eyes seemed good to them. They might pay as long as they deemed it right to pay, but they might not name Lord Neville to his father.

While things were thus the Earl married again,—the penniless daughter of a noble house,—a woman not young, for she was forty when he married her, but more than twenty years his junior. It sufficed for him that she was noble, and as he believed good. Good to him she was,—with a duty that was almost excessive. Religious she was, and self-denying; giving much and demanding little; keeping herself in the background,



but possessing wonderful energy in the service of others. Whether she could in truth be called good the reader may say when he has finished this story.

Then, when the Earl had been married some three years to his second wife, the heir died. He died, and as far as Scroope Manor was concerned there was an end of him and of the creature he had called his wife. An annuity was purchased for her. That she should be entitled to call herself Lady Neville while she lived, was the sad necessity of the condition. It was understood by all who came near the Earl that no one was to mention her within his hearing. He was thankful that no heir had come from that most horrid union. The woman was never mentioned to him again, nor need she trouble us further in the telling of our chronicle.

But when Lord Neville died, it was necessary that the old man should think of his new heir. Alas; in that family, though there was much that was good and noble, there had ever been

intestine feuds,—causes of quarrel in which each party would be sure that he was right. They were a people who thought much of the church, who were good to the poor, who strove to be noble;—but they could not forgive injuries. They could not forgive even when there were no injuries. The present Earl had quarrelled with his brother in early life,—and had therefore quarrelled with all that had belonged to the brother. The brother was now gone, leaving two sons behind him,—two young Nevilles, Fred and Jack, of whom Fred, the eldest, was now the heir. It was at last settled that Fred should be sent for to Scroope Manor. Fred came, being at that time a lieutenant in a cavalry regiment,—a fine handsome youth of five and twenty, with the Neville eyes and Neville finely cut features. Kindly letters passed between the widowed mother and the present Lady Scroope; and it was decided at last, at his own request, that he should remain one year longer in the army, and then

be installed as the eldest son at Scroope Manor. Again the lawyer was told to do what was proper in regard to money.

A few words more must be said of Lady Scroope, and then the preface to our story will be over. She too was an Earl's daughter, and had been much loved by our Earl's first wife. Lady Scroope had been the elder by ten years; but yet they had been dear friends, and Lady Mary Wycombe had passed many months of her early life amidst the gloom of the great rooms at Scroope Manor. She had thus known the Earl well before she consented to marry him. She had never possessed beauty,—and hardly grace. She was strong featured, tall, with pride clearly written in her face. A reader of faces would have declared at once that she was proud of the blood which ran in her veins. She was very proud of her blood, and did in truth believe that noble birth was a greater gift than any wealth. She was thoroughly able to look down upon a parvenu millionaire,—to look

down upon such a one and not to pretend to despise him. When the Earl's letter came to her asking her to share his gloom, she was as poor as Charity,—dependent on a poor brother who hated the burden of such claim. But she would have wedded no commoner, let his wealth and age have been as they might. She knew Lord Scroope's age, and she knew the gloom of Scroope Manor ;—and she became his wife. To her of course was told the story of the heir's marriage, and she knew that she could expect no light, no joy in the old house from the scions of the rising family. But now all this was changed, and it might be that she could take the new heir to her heart.

## CHAPTER II.

FRED NEVILLE.

WHEN Fred Neville first came to the Manor, the old Earl trembled when called upon to receive him. Of the lad he had heard almost nothing,—of his appearance literally nothing. It might be that his heir would be meanly visaged, a youth of whom he would have cause to be ashamed, one from whose countenance no sign of high blood would shine out; or, almost worse, he also might have that look, half of vanity, and half of vice, of which the father had gradually become aware in his own son, and which in him had degraded the Neville beauty. But Fred, to look at, was a gallant fellow,—such a youth as women love to see about a house,—well-made, active, quick, self-asserting, fair-

haired, blue-eyed, short-lipped, with small whiskers, thinking but little of his own personal advantages, but thinking much of his own way. As far as the appearance of the young man went the Earl could not but be satisfied. And to him, at any rate in this, the beginning of their connexion, Fred Neville was modest and submissive. "You are welcome to Scroope," said the old man, receiving him with stately urbanity in the middle of the hall. "I am so much obliged to you, uncle," he said. "You are come to me as a son, my boy,—as a son. It will be your own fault if you are not a son to us in everything." Then in lieu of further words there shone a tear in each of the young man's eyes, much more eloquent to the Earl than could have been any words. He put his arm over his nephew's shoulders, and in this guise walked with him into the room in which Lady Scroope was awaiting them. "Mary," he said to his wife, "here is our heir. Let him be a son to us." Then Lady Scroope took



the young man in her arms and kissed him. Thus auspiciously was commenced this new connexion.

The arrival was in September, and the gamekeeper, with the under gamekeeper, had for the last month been told to be on his mettle. Young Mr. Neville was no doubt a sportsman. And the old groom had been warned that hunters might be wanted in the stables next winter. Mrs. Bunce was made to understand that liberties would probably be taken with the house, such as had not yet been perpetrated in her time;—for the late heir had never made the Manor his home from the time of his leaving school. It was felt by all that great changes were to be effected,—and it was felt also that the young man on whose behalf all this was to be permitted, could not but be elated by his position. Of such elation, however, there were not many signs. To his uncle, Fred Neville was, as has been said, modest and submissive; to his aunt he was gentle but not submissive. The rest of the household

he treated civilly, but with none of that awe which was perhaps expected from him. As for shooting, he had come direct from his friend Carnaby's moor. Carnaby had forest as well as moor, and Fred thought but little of partridges,—little of such old-fashioned partridge-shooting as was prepared for him at Scroope,—after grouse and deer. As for hunting in Dorsetshire, if his uncle wished it,—why in that case he would think of it. According to his ideas, Dorsetshire was not the best county in England for hunting. Last year his regiment had been at Bristol and he had ridden with the Duke's hounds. This winter he was to be stationed in Ireland, and he had an idea that Irish hunting was good. If he found that his uncle made a point of it, he would bring his horses to Scroope for a month at Christmas. Thus he spoke to the head groom,—and thus he spoke also to his aunt, who felt some surprise when he talked of Scotland and his horses. She had thought that only men of large fortunes



shot deer and kept studs,—and perhaps conceived that the officers of the 20th Hussars were generally engaged in looking after the affairs of their regiment, and in preparation for meeting the enemy.

Fred now remained a month at Scroope, and during that time there was but little personal intercourse between him and his uncle in spite of the affectionate greeting with which their acquaintance had been commenced. The old man's habits of life were so confirmed that he could not bring himself to alter them. Throughout the entire morning he would sit in his own room alone. He would then be visited by his steward, his groom, and his butler ;—and would think that he gave his orders, submitting, however, in almost every thing to them. His wife would sometimes sit with him for half an hour, holding his hand, in moments of tenderness unseen and unsuspected by all the world around them. Sometimes the clergyman of the parish would come to him, so that he might know the

wants of the people. He would have the newspaper in his hands for a while, and would daily read the Bible for an hour. Then he would slowly write some letter, almost measuring every point which his pen made,—thinking that thus he was performing his duty as a man of business. Few men perhaps did less,—but what he did do was good ; and of self-indulgence there was surely none. Between such a one and the young man who had now come to his house there could be but little real connexion.

Between Fred Neville and Lady Scroope there arose a much closer intimacy. A woman can get nearer to a young man than can any old man ;—can learn more of his ways, and better understand his wishes. From the very first there arose between them a matter of difference, as to which there was no quarrel, but very much of argument. In that argument Lady Scroope was unable to prevail. She was very anxious that the heir should at once abandon

his profession and sell out of the army. Of what use could it be to him now to run after his regiment to Ireland, seeing that undoubtedly the great duties of his life all centred at Scroope? There were many discussions on the subject, but Fred would not give way in regard to the next year. He would have this year, he said, to himself;—and after that he would come and settle himself at Scroope. Yes; no doubt he would marry as soon as he could find a fitting wife. Of course it would be right that he should marry. He fully understood the responsibilities of his position;—so he said, in answer to his aunt's eager, scrutinising, beseeching questions. But as he had joined his regiment, he thought it would be good for him to remain with it one year longer. He particularly desired to see something of Ireland, and if he did not do so now, he would never have the opportunity. Lady Scroope, understanding well that he was pleading for a year of grace from the dulness of the Manor, explained to him

that his uncle would by no means expect that he should remain always at Scroope. If he would marry, the old London house should be prepared for him and his bride. He might travel,—not, however, going very far afield. He might get into Parliament; as to which, if such were his ambition, his uncle would give him every aid. He might have his friends at Scroope Manor,—Carnaby and all the rest of them. Every allurements was offered to him. But he had commenced by claiming a year of grace, and to that claim he adhered.

Could his uncle have brought himself to make the request in person, at first, he might probably have succeeded;—and had he succeeded, there would have been no story for us as to the fortunes of Scroope Manor. But the Earl was too proud and perhaps too diffident to make the attempt. From his wife he heard all that took place; and though he was grieved, he expressed no anger. He could not feel himself justified in expressing anger because his nephew chose to

remain for yet a year attached to his profession. "Who knows what may happen to him?" said the Countess.

"Ah, indeed! But we are all in the hands of the Almighty." And the Earl bowed his head. Lady Scroope, fully recognizing the truth of her husband's pious ejaculation, nevertheless thought that human care might advantageously be added to the divine interposition for which, as she well knew, her lord prayed fervently as soon as the words were out of his mouth.

"But it would be so great a thing if he could be settled. Sophia Mellerby has promised to come here for a couple of months in the winter. He could not possibly do better than that."

"The Mellerbys are very good people," said the Earl. "Her grandmother, the duchess, is one of the very best women in England. Her mother, Lady Sophia, is an excellent creature,—religious, and with the soundest

“principles. Mr. Mellerby, as a commoner, stands as high as any man in England.”

“They have held the same property since the wars of the roses. And then I suppose the money should count for something,” added the lady.

Lord Scroope would not admit the importance of the money, but was quite willing to acknowledge that were his heir to make Sophia Mellerby the future Lady Scroope he would be content. But he could not interfere. He did not think it wise to speak to young men on such a subject. He thought that by doing so a young man might be rather diverted from than attracted to the object in view. Nor would he press his wishes upon his nephew as to next year. “Were I to ask it,” he said, “and were he to refuse me, I should be hurt. I am bound therefore to ask nothing that is unreasonable.” Lady Scroope did not quite agree with her husband in this. She thought that as every thing was to be done for the young man; as



money almost without stint was to be placed at his command ; as hunting, parliament, and a house in London were offered to him ;—as the treatment due to a dear and only son was shown to him, he ought to give something in return ; but she herself, could say no more than she had said, and she knew already that in those few matters in which her husband had a decided will, he was not to be turned from it.

It was arranged, therefore, that Fred Neville should join his regiment at Limerick in October, and that he should come home to Scroope for a fortnight or three weeks at Christmas. Sophia Mellerby was to be Lady Scroope's guest at that time, and at last it was decided that Mrs. Neville, who had never been seen by the Earl, should be asked to come and bring with her her younger son, John Neville, who had been successful in obtaining a commission in the Engineers. Other guests should be invited, and an attempt should be made to remove

the mantle of gloom from Scroope Manor,—with the sole object of ingratiating the heir.

Early in October Fred went to Limerick, and from thence with a detached troop of his regiment he was sent to the cavalry barracks at Ennis, the assize town of the neighbouring county Clare. This was at first held to be a misfortune by him, as Limerick is in all respects a better town than Ennis, and in county Limerick the hunting is far from being bad, whereas Clare is hardly a country for a Nimrod. But a young man, with money at command, need not regard distances; and the Limerick balls and the Limerick coverts were found to be equally within reach. From Ennis also he could attend some of the Galway meets,—and then with no other superior than a captain hardly older than himself to interfere with his movements, he could indulge in that wild district the spirit of adventure which was strong within him. When young men are anxious to indulge the spirit of adventure, they generally do so



by falling in love with young women of whom their fathers and mothers would not approve. In these days a spirit of adventure hardly goes further than this, unless it take a young man to a German gambling table.

When Fred left Scroope it was understood that he was to correspond with his aunt. The Earl would have been utterly lost had he attempted to write a letter to his nephew without having something special to communicate to him. But Lady Scroope was more facile with her pen, and it was rightly thought that the heir would hardly bring himself to look upon Scroope as his home, unless some link were maintained between himself and the place. Lady Scroope therefore wrote once a week,—telling everything that there was to be told of the horses, the game, and even of the tenants. She studied her letters, endeavouring to make them light and agreeable,—such as a young man of large prospects would like to receive from his own mother. He was “Dearest

Fred," and in one of those earliest written she expressed a hope that should any trouble ever fall upon him he would come to her as to his dearest friend. Fred was not a bad correspondent, and answered about every other letter. His replies were short, but that was a matter of course. He was "as jolly as a sandboy," "right as a trivet;" had had "one or two "very good things," and thought that upon the whole he liked Ennis better than Limerick. "Johnstone is such a deuced good fellow!" Johnstone was the captain of the 20th Hussars who happened to be stationed with him at Limerick. Lady Scroope did not quite like the epithet, but she knew that she had to learn to hear things to which she had hitherto not been accustomed.

This was all very well;—but Lady Scroope, having a friend in Co. Clare, thought that she might receive tidings of the adopted one which would be useful, and with this object she opened a correspondence with Lady Mary

Quin. Lady Mary Quin was a daughter of the Earl of Kilfenora, and was well acquainted with all County Clare. She was almost sure to hear of the doings of any officers stationed at Ennis, and would do so certainly in regard to an officer that was specially introduced to her. Fred Neville was invited to stay at Castle Quin as long as he pleased, and actually did pass one night under its roof. But, unfortunately for him, that spirit of adventure which he was determined to indulge led him into the neighbourhood of Castle Quin when it was far from his intention to interfere with the Earl or with Lady Mary, and thus led to the following letter which Lady Scroope received about the middle of December,—just a week before Fred's return to the Manor.

“QUIN CASTLE, ENNISTIMON,  
“14 *December*, 18—.

“MY DEAR LADY SCROOPE,

“Since I wrote to you before Mr.  
“Neville has been here once, and we all liked

“him very much. My father was quite taken  
“with him. He is always fond of the young  
“officers, and is not the less inclined to be so of  
“one who is so dear and near to you. I wish  
“he would have stayed longer, and hope that he  
“shall come again. We have not much to offer  
“in the way of amusement, but in January and  
“February there is good snipe shooting.

“I find that Mr. Neville is very fond of  
“shooting,—so much so that before we knew  
“anything of him except his name we had  
“heard that he had been on our coast after  
“seals and sea birds. We have very high  
“cliffs near here,—some people say the highest  
“in the world, and there is one called the Hag’s  
“Head from which men get down and shoot  
“sea-gulls. He has been different times in our  
“village of Liscannor, and I think he has a boat  
“there or at Lahinch. I believe he has already  
“killed ever so many seals.

“I tell you all this for a reason. I hope that  
“it may come to nothing, but I think that you

“ought to know. There is a widow lady living  
“not very far from Liscannor, but nearer up  
“to the cliffs. Her cottage is on papa’s pro-  
“perty, but I think she holds it from somebody  
“else. I don’t like to say anything to papa  
“about it. Her name is Mrs. O’Hara, and she  
“has a daughter.” When Lady Scroope had  
read so far, she almost let the paper drop from  
her hand. Of course she knew what it all meant.  
An Irish Miss O’Hara! And Fred Neville  
was spending his time in pursuit of this girl!  
Lady Scroope had known what it would be  
when the young man was allowed to return to  
his regiment in spite of the manifold duties  
which should have bound him to Scroope Manor.  
“I have seen this young lady,” continued Lady  
Mary, “and she is certainly very pretty. But  
“nobody knows anything about them; and I  
“cannot even learn whether they belong to the  
“real O’Haras. I should think not, as they are  
“Roman Catholics. At any rate Miss O’Hara  
“can hardly be a fitting companion for Lord

“Scroope’s heir. I believe they are ladies, but  
“I don’t think that any one knows them here,  
“except the priest of Kilmacrenny. We never  
“could make out quite why they came here,—  
“only that Father Marty knows something  
“about them. He is the priest of Kilmacrenny.  
“She is a very pretty girl, and I never heard  
“a word against her ;—but I don’t know whether  
“that does not make it worse, because a young  
“man is so likely to get entangled.

“I daresay nothing shall come of it, and I’m  
“sure I hope that nothing may. But I thought  
“it best to tell you. *Pray* do not let him know  
“that you have heard from me. Young men  
“are so very particular about things, and I  
“don’t know what he might say of me if he  
“knew that I had written home to you about  
“his private affairs. All the same if I can be  
“of any service to you, pray let me know.  
“Excuse haste. And believe me to be,

“Yours most sincerely,

“MARY QUIN.”



A Roman Catholic ;—one whom no one knew but the priest ;—a girl who perhaps never had a father ! All this was terrible to Lady Scroope. Roman Catholics,—and especially Irish Roman Catholics,—were people whom, as she thought, every one should fear in this world, and for whom everything was to be feared in the next. How would it be with the Earl if this heir also were to tell him some day that he was married ? Would not his grey hairs be brought to the grave with a double load of sorrow ? However, for the present she thought it better to say not a word to the Earl.

## CHAPTER III.

SOPHIE MELLERBY.

LADY SCROOPE thought a great deal about her friend's communication, but at last made up her mind that she could do nothing till Fred should have returned. Indeed she hardly knew what she could do when he did come back. The more she considered it the greater seemed to her to be the difficulty of doing anything. How is a woman, how is even a mother, to caution a young man against the danger of becoming acquainted with a pretty girl? She could not mention Miss O'Hara's name without mentioning that of Lady Mary Quin in connexion with it. And when asked, as of course she would be asked, as to her own information, what could she say? She had been told that



he had made himself acquainted with a widow lady who had a pretty daughter, and that was all! When young men will run into such difficulties, it is, alas, so very difficult to interfere with them!

And yet the matter was of such importance as to justify almost any interference. A Roman Catholic Irish girl of whom nothing was known but that her mother was said to be a widow, was, in Lady Scroope's eyes, as formidable a danger as could come in the way of her husband's heir. Fred Neville was, she thought, with all his good qualities, exactly the man to fall in love with a wild Irish girl. If Fred were to write home some day and say that he was about to marry such a bride,—or, worse again, that he had married her, the tidings would nearly kill the Earl. After all that had been endured, such a termination to the hopes of the family would be too cruel! And Lady Scroope could not but feel the injustice of it. Every thing was being done for this heir, for whom

nothing need have been done. He was treated as a son, but he was not a son. He was treated with exceptional favour as a son. Everything was at his disposal. He might marry and begin life at once with every want amply supplied, if he would only marry such a woman as was fit to be a future Countess of Scroope. Very little was required from him. He was not expected to marry an heiress. An heiress indeed was prepared for him, and would be there, ready for him at Christmas,—an heiress, beautiful, well-born, fit in every respect,—religious too. But he was not to be asked to marry Sophie Mellerby. He might choose for himself. There were other well-born young women about the world,—duchesses' granddaughters in abundance! But it was imperative that he should marry at least a lady, and at least a Protestant.

Lady Scroope felt very strongly that he should never have been allowed to rejoin his regiment, when a home at Scroope was offered to him. He was a free agent of course, and

equally of course the title and the property must ultimately be his. But something of a bargain might have been made with him when all the privileges of a son were offered to him. When he was told that he might have all Scroope to himself,—for it amounted nearly to that; that he might hunt there and shoot there and entertain his friends; that the family house in London should be given up to him if he would marry properly; that an income almost without limit should be provided for him, surely it would not have been too much to demand that as a matter of course he should leave the army! But this had not been done; and now there was an Irish Roman Catholic widow with a daughter, with seal-shooting and a boat and high cliffs right in the young man's way! Lady Scroope could not analyse it, but felt all the danger as though it were by instinct. Partridge and pheasant shooting on a gentleman's own grounds, and an occasional day's hunting with the hounds in his own county,

were, in Lady Scroope's estimation, becoming amusements for an English gentleman. They did not interfere with the exercise of his duties. She had by no means brought herself to like the yearly raids into Scotland made latterly by sportsmen. But if Scotch moors and forests were dangerous, what were Irish cliffs! Deer-stalking was bad in her imagination. She was almost sure that when men went up to Scotch forests they did not go to church on Sundays. But the idea of seal-shooting was much more horrible. And then there was that priest who was the only friend of the widow who had the daughter!

On the morning of the day in which Fred was to reach the Manor, Lady Scroope did speak to her husband. "Don't you think, my dear, that something might be done to prevent Fred's returning to that horrid country?"

"What can we do?"

"I suppose he would wish to oblige you. You are being very good to him."

“It is for the old to give, Mary, and for the young to accept. I do all for him because he is all to me; but what am I to him, that he should sacrifice any pleasure for me? He can break my heart. Were I even to quarrel with him, the worst I could do would be to send him to the money-lenders for a year or two.”

“But why should he care about his regiment now?”

“Because his regiment means liberty.”

“And you won't ask him to give it up?”

“I think not. If I were to ask him I should expect him to yield, and then I should be disappointed were he to refuse. I do not wish him to think me a tyrant.” This was the end of the conversation, for Lady Scroope did not as yet dare to speak to the Earl about the widow and her daughter. She must now try her skill and eloquence with the young man himself.

The young man arrived and was received

with kindest greetings. Two horses had preceded him, so that he might find himself mounted as soon as he chose after his arrival, and two others were coming. This was all very well, but his aunt was a little hurt when he declared his purpose of going down to the stables just as she told him that Sophia Mellerby was in the house. He arrived on the 23rd at 4 P.M., and it had been declared that he was to hunt on the morrow. It was already dark, and surely he might have been content on the first evening of his arrival to abstain from the stables! Not a word had been said to Sophie Mellerby of Lady Scroope's future hopes. Lady Scroope and Lady Sophia would each have thought that it was wicked to do so. But the two women had been fussy, and Miss Mellerby must have been less discerning than are young ladies generally, had she not understood what was expected of her. Girls are undoubtedly better prepared to fall in love with men whom they have never seen, than are men



with girls. It is a girl's great business in life to love and to be loved. Of some young men it may almost be said that it is their great business to avoid such a catastrophe. Such ought not to have been the case with Fred Neville now ;—but in such light he regarded it. He had already said to himself that Sophie Mellerby was to be pitched at his head. He knew no reason,—none as yet,—why he should not like Miss Mellerby well enough. But he was a little on his guard against her, and preferred seeing his horses first. Sophie, when according to custom, and indeed in this instance in accordance with special arrangement, she went into Lady Scroope's sitting-room for tea, was rather disappointed at not finding Mr. Neville there. She knew that he had visited his uncle immediately on his arrival, and having just come in from the park she had gone to her room to make some little preparation for the meeting. If it was written in Fate's book that she was to be the next Lady Scroope, the

meeting was important. Perhaps that writing in Fate's book might depend on the very adjustment which she was now making of her hair.

"He has gone to look at his horses," said Lady Scroope, unable not to shew her disappointment by the tone of her voice.

"That is so natural," said Sophie, who was more cunning. "Young men almost idolize their horses. I should like to go and see Dandy whenever he arrives anywhere, only I don't dare!" Dandy was Miss Mellerby's own horse, and was accustomed to make journeys up and down between Mellerby and London.

"I don't think horses and guns and dogs should be too much thought of," said Lady Scroope gravely. "There is a tendency I think at present to give them an undue importance. When our amusements become more serious to us than our business, we must be going astray."

"I suppose we always are going astray," said Miss Mellerby. Lady Scroope sighed and shook



her head ; but in shaking it she shewed that she completely agreed with the opinion expressed by her guest.

As there were only two horses to be inspected, and as Fred Neville absolutely refused the groom's invitation to look at the old carriage horses belonging to the family, he was back in his aunt's room before Miss Mellerby had gone up-stairs to dress for dinner. The introduction was made, and Fred did his best to make himself agreeable. He was such a man that no girl could, at the first sight of him, think herself injured by being asked to love him. She was a good girl, and would have consented to marry no man without feeling sure of his affections ; but Fred Neville was bold and frank as well as handsome, and had plenty to say for himself. It might be that he was vicious, or ill-tempered, or selfish, and it would be necessary that she should know much of him before she would give herself into his keeping ; but as far as the first sight went, and the first hearing, Sophie

Mellerby's impressions were all in Fred's favour. It is no doubt a fact that with the very best of girls a man is placed in a very good light by being heir to a peerage and a large property.

"Do you hunt, Miss Mellerby?" he asked. She shook her head and looked grave, and then laughed. Among her people hunting was not thought to be a desirable accomplishment for young ladies. "Almost all girls do hunt now," said Fred.

"Do you think it is a nice amusement for young ladies?" asked the aunt in a severe tone.

"I don't see why not;—that is if they know how to ride."

"I know how to ride," said Sophie Mellerby.

"Riding is all very well," said Lady Scroope. "I quite approve of it for girls. When I was young, everybody did not ride as they do now. Nevertheless it is very well, and is thought to be healthy. But as for hunting, Sophy, I'm sure your mamma would be very

“much distressed if you were to think of such  
“a thing.”

“But, dear Lady Scroope, I haven’t thought of  
“it, and I am not going to think of it;—and if  
“I thought of it ever so much, I shouldn’t do it.  
“Poor mamma would be frightened into fits,—  
“only that nobody at Mellerby could possibly be  
“made to believe it, unless they saw me doing it.”

“Then there can be no reason why you  
“shouldn’t make the attempt,” said Fred.  
Upon which Lady Scroope pretended to look  
grave, and told him that he was very wicked.  
But let an old lady be ever so strict towards  
her own sex, she likes a little wickedness in a  
young man,—if only he does not carry it to the  
extent of marrying the wrong sort of young  
woman.

Sophia Mellerby was a tall, graceful, well-  
formed girl, showing her high blood in every  
line of her face. On her mother’s side she had  
come from the Ancrums, whose family, as every-  
body knows, is one of the oldest in England;

and, as the Earl had said, the Mellerbys had been Mellerbys from the time of King John, and had been living on the same spot for at least four centuries. They were and always had been Mellerbys of Mellerby,—the very name of the parish being the same as that of the family. If Sophia Mellerby did not shew breeding, what girl could shew it? She was fair, with a somewhat thin oval face, with dark eyes, and an almost perfect Grecian nose. Her mouth was small, and her chin delicately formed. And yet it can hardly be said that she was beautiful. Or, if beautiful, she was so in women's eyes rather than in those of men. She lacked colour and perhaps animation in her countenance. She had more character, indeed, than was told by her face, which is generally so true an index of the mind. Her education had been as good as England could afford, and her intellect had been sufficient to enable her to make use of it. But her chief charm in the eyes of many consisted in the fact, doubted by none, that she was every

inch a lady. She was an only daughter, too,—with an only brother; and as the Ancrums were all rich, she would have a very pretty fortune of her own. Fred Neville, who had literally been nobody before his cousin had died, might certainly do much worse than marry her.

And after a day or two they did seem to get on very well together. He had reached Scroope on the 21st, and on the 23rd Mrs. Neville arrived with her youngest son Jack Neville. This was rather a trial to the Earl, as he had never yet seen his brother's widow. He had heard when his brother married that she was fast, fond of riding, and loud. She had been the daughter of a Colonel Smith, with whom his brother, at that time a Captain Neville, had formed acquaintance;—and had been a beauty very well known as such at Dublin and other garrison towns. No real harm had ever been known of her, but the old Earl had always felt that his brother had made an unfortunate marriage. As at that

time they had not been on speaking terms, it had not signified much ;—but there had been a prejudice at Scroope against the Captain's wife, which by no means died out when the late Julia Smith became the Captain's widow with two sons. Old reminiscences remain very firm with old people,—and Lord Scroope was still much afraid of the fast, loud beauty. His principles told him that he should not sever the mother from the son, and that as it suited him to take the son for his own purposes, he should also, to some extent, accept the mother also. But he dreaded the affair. He dreaded Mrs. Neville ; and he dreaded Jack, who had been so named after his gallant grandfather, Colonel Smith. When Mrs. Neville arrived, she was found to be so subdued and tame that she could hardly open her mouth before the old Earl. Her loudness, if she ever had been loud, was certainly all gone,—and her fastness, if ever she had been fast, had been worn out of her. She was an old woman, with the



relics of great beauty, idolizing her two sons for whom all her life had been a sacrifice, in weak health, and prepared, if necessary, to sit in silent awe at the feet of the Earl who had been so good to her boy.

“I don’t know how to thank you for what “you have done,” she said, in a low voice.

“No thanks are required,” said the Earl. “He is the same to us as if he were our own.” Then she raised the old man’s hand and kissed it,—and the old man owned to himself that he had made a mistake.

As to Jack Neville——. But Jack Neville shall have another chapter opened on his behalf.



## CHAPTER IV.

JACK NEVILLE.

JOHN is a very respectable name;—perhaps there is no name more respectable in the English language. Sir John, as the head of a family, is certainly as respectable as any name can be. For an old family coachman it beats all names. Mr. John Smith would be sure to have a larger balance at his banker's than Charles Smith or Orlando Smith,—or perhaps than any other Smith whatever. The Rev. Frederic Walker might be a wet parson, but the Rev. John Walker would assuredly be a good clergyman at all points, though perhaps a little dull in his sermons. Yet almost all Johns have been Jacks, and Jack, in point of respectability, is the very

reverse of John. How it is, or when it is, that the Jacks become re-Johned, and go back to the original and excellent name given to them by their godfathers and godmothers, nobody ever knows. Jack Neville, probably through some foolish fondness on his mother's part, had never been re-Johned,—and consequently the Earl, when he made up his mind to receive his sister-in-law, was at first unwilling to invite his younger nephew. “But he is in the Engineers,” said Lady Scroope. The argument had its weight, and Jack Neville was invited. But even that argument failed to obliterate the idea which had taken hold of the Earl's mind. There had never yet been a Jack among the Scroopes.

When Jack came he was found to be very unlike the Nevilles in appearance. In the first place he was dark, and in the next place he was ugly. He was a tall, well-made fellow, taller than his brother, and probably stronger; and he had very different eyes,—very dark

brown eyes, deeply set in his head, with large dark eyebrows. He wore his black hair very short, and had no beard whatever. His features were hard, and on one cheek he had a cicatrice, the remains of some misfortune that had happened to him in his boyhood. But in spite of his ugliness,—for he was ugly, there was much about him in his gait and manner that claimed attention. Lord Scroope, the moment that he saw him, felt that he ought not to be called Jack. Indeed the Earl was almost afraid of him, and so after a time was the Countess. “Jack ought to have been the eldest,” Fred had said to his aunt.

“Why should he have been the eldest?”

“Because he is so much the cleverest. I could never have got into the Engineers.”

“That seems to be a reason why he should be the youngest,” said Lady Scroope.

Two or three other people arrived, and the house became much less dull than was its wont. Jack Neville occasionally rode his brother's

horses, and the Earl was forced to acknowledge another mistake. The mother was very silent, but she was a lady. The young Engineer was not only a gentleman,—but for his age a very well educated gentleman, and Lord Scroope was almost proud of his relatives. For the first week the affair between Fred Neville and Miss Mellerby really seemed to make progress. She was not a girl given to flirting,—not prone to outward demonstrations of partiality for a young man; but she never withdrew herself from her intended husband, and Fred seemed quite willing to be attentive. Not a word was said to hurry the young people, and Lady Scroope's hopes were high. Of course no allusion had been made to those horrid Irish people, but it did not seem to Lady Scroope that the heir had left his heart behind him in Co. Clare.

Fred had told his aunt in one of his letters that he would stay three weeks at Scroope, but she had not supposed that he would limit himself exactly to that period. No absolute limit

had been fixed for the visit of Mrs. Neville and her younger son, but it was taken for granted that they would not remain should Fred depart. As to Sophie Mellerby, her visit was elastic. She was there for a purpose, and might remain all the winter if the purpose could be so served. For the first fortnight Lady Scroope thought that the affair was progressing well. Fred hunted three days a week, and was occasionally away from home,—going to dine with a regiment at Dorchester, and once making a dash up to London; but his manner to Miss Mellerby was very nice, and there could be no doubt but that Sophie liked him. When, on a sudden, the heir said a word to his aunt which was almost equal to firing a pistol at her head. “I think Master Jack is making it all square with Sophie Mellerby.”

If there was anything that Lady Scroope hated almost as much as improper marriages it was slang. She professed that she did not understand it; and in carrying out her profes-

sion always stopped the conversation to have any word explained to her which she thought had been used in an improper sense. The idea of a young man making it "all square" with a young woman was repulsive, but the idea of this young man making it "all square" with this young woman was so much more repulsive, and the misery to her was so intensely heightened by the unconcern displayed by the heir in so speaking of the girl with whom he ought to have been making it "all square" himself, that she could hardly allow herself to be arrested by that stumbling block. "Impossible!" she exclaimed,— "that is if you mean,—if you mean,—if you mean anything at all."

"I do mean a good deal."

"Then I don't believe a word of it. It's quite out of the question. It's impossible. I'm quite sure your brother understands his position as a gentleman too thoroughly to dream of such a thing."



This was Greek to Fred Neville. Why his brother should not fall in love with a pretty girl, and why a pretty girl should not return the feeling, without any disgrace to his brother, Fred could not understand. His brother was a Neville, and was moreover an uncommonly clever fellow. "Why shouldn't he dream of "it?"

"In the first place—. Well! I did think, "Fred, that you yourself seemed to be,—seemed "to be taken with Miss Mellerby."

"Who? I? Oh, dear no. She's a very "nice girl and all that, and I like her amaz- "ingly. If she were Jack's wife, I never "saw a girl I should so much like for a "sister."

"It is quite out of the question. I wonder "that you can speak in such a way. What "right can your brother have to think of such a "girl as Miss Mellerby? He has no position; "—no means."

"He is my brother," said Fred, with a little



touch of anger,—already discounting his future earldom on his brother's behalf.

“Yes;—he is your brother; but you don't suppose that Mr. Mellerby would give his daughter to an officer in the Engineers who has, as far as I know, no private means whatever.”

“He will have,—when my mother dies. Of course I can't speak of doing anything for anybody at present. I may die before my uncle. Nothing is more likely. But then, if I do, Jack would be my uncle's heir.”

“I don't believe there's anything in it at all,” said Lady Scroope in great dudgeon.

“I dare say not. If there is, they haven't told me. It's not likely they would. But I thought I saw something coming up, and as it seemed to be the most natural thing in the world, I mentioned it. As for me,—Miss Mellerby doesn't care a straw for me. You may be sure of that.”

“She would—if you’d ask her.”

“But I never shall ask her. What’s the  
“use of beating about the bush, aunt? I never  
“shall ask her; and if I did, she wouldn’t have  
“me. If you want to make Sophie Mellerby  
“your niece, Jack’s your game.”

Lady Scroope was ineffably disgusted. To be told that “Jack was her game” was in itself a terrible annoyance to her. But to be so told in reference to such a subject was painful in the extreme. Of course she could not make this young man marry as she wished. She had acknowledged to herself from the first that there could be no cause of anger against him should he not fall into the silken net which was spread for him. Lady Scroope was not an unreasonable woman, and understood well the power which young people have over old people. She knew that she couldn’t quarrel with Fred Neville, even if she would. He was the heir, and in a very few years would be the owner of everything. In order to keep him straight, to

save him from debts, to protect him from money-lenders, and to secure the family standing and property till he should have made things stable by having a wife and heir of his own, all manner of indulgence must be shown him. She quite understood that such a horse must be ridden with a very light hand. She must put up with slang from him, though she would resent it from any other human being. He must be allowed to smoke in his bed-room, to be late at dinner, to shirk morning prayers,—making her only too happy if he would not shirk Sunday church also. Of course he must choose a bride for himself,—only not a Roman Catholic wild Irish bride of whom nobody knew anything!

As to that other matter concerning Jack and Sophie Mellerby, she could not bring herself to believe it. She had certainly seen that they were good friends,—as would have been quite fit had Fred been engaged to her; but she had not conceived the possibility of any mistake on

such a subject. Surely Sophie herself knew better what she was about! How would she,—she, Lady Scroope,—answer it to Lady Sophia, if Sophie should go back to Mellerby from her house, engaged to a younger brother who had nothing but a commission in the Engineers? Sophie had been sent to Scroope on purpose to be fallen in love with by the heir; and how would it be with Lady Scroope if, in lieu of this, she should not only have been fallen in love with by the heir's younger brother, but have responded favourably to so base an affection?

That same afternoon Fred told his uncle that he was going back to Ireland on the day but one following, thus curtailing his promised three weeks by two days. "I am sorry that "you are so much hurried, Fred," said the old man.

"So am I, my lord,—but Johnstone has to "go to London on business, and I promised "when I got leave that I wouldn't throw him

“over. You see,—when one has a profession  
“one must attend to it,—more or less.”

“But you hardly need the profession.”

“Thank you, uncle;—it is very kind of you to  
“say so. And as you wish me to leave it, I  
“will when the year is over. I have told the  
“fellows that I shall stay till next October, and  
“I shouldn’t like to change now.” The Earl  
hadn’t another word to say.

But on the day before Fred’s departure there came a short note from Lady Mary Quin which made poor Lady Scroope more unhappy than ever. Tidings had reached her in a mysterious way that the O’Haras were eagerly expecting the return of Mr. Neville. Lady Mary thought that if Mr. Neville’s quarters could be moved from Ennis, it would be very expedient for many reasons. She knew that enquiries had been made for him and that he was engaged to dine on a certain day with Father Marty the priest. Father Marty would no doubt go any lengths to serve his friends the O’Haras. Then

Lady Mary was very anxious that not a word should be said to Mr. Neville which might lead him to suppose that reports respecting him were being sent from Quin Castle to Scroope.

The Countess in her agony thought it best to tell the whole story to the Earl. "But what can I do?" said the old man. "Young men will form these acquaintances." His fears were evidently as yet less dark than those of his wife.

"It would be very bad if we were to hear that he was married to a girl of whom we only know that she is a Roman Catholic and friendless."

The Earl's brow became very black. "I don't think that he would treat me in that way."

"Not meaning it, perhaps;—but if he should become entangled and make a promise!"

Then the Earl did speak to his nephew. "Fred," he said, "I have been thinking a great deal about you. I have little else to think of



“now. I should take it as a mark of affection  
“from you if you would give up the army—at  
“once.”

“And not join my regiment again at  
“all?”

“It is absurd that you should do so in your  
“present position. You should be here, and  
“learn the circumstances of the property be-  
“fore it becomes your own. There can hardly  
“be more than a year or two left for the  
“lesson.”

The Earl's manner was very impressive. He looked into his nephew's face as he spoke, and stood with his hand upon the young man's shoulder. But Fred Neville was a Neville all over,—and the Nevilles had always chosen to have their own way. He had not the power of intellect nor the finished manliness which his brother possessed; but he could be as obstinate as any Neville,—as obstinate as his father had been, or his uncle. And in this matter he had arguments which his uncle could hardly answer



on the spur of the moment. No doubt he could sell out in proper course, but at the present moment he was as much bound by military law to return as would be any common soldier at the expiration of his furlough. He must go back. That at any rate was certain. And if his uncle did not much mind it, he would prefer to remain with his regiment till October.

Lord Scroope could not condescend to repeat his request, or even again to allude to it. His whole manner altered as he took his hand away from his nephew's shoulder. But still he was determined that there should be no quarrel. As yet there was no ground for quarrelling,—and by any quarrel the injury to him would be much greater than any that could befall the heir. He stood for a moment and then he spoke again in a tone very different from that he had used before. “I hope,” he said,—and then he paused again; “I hope you know how very much “depends on your marrying in a manner suitable to your position.”

“Quite so;—I think.”

“It is the one hope left to me to see you properly settled in life.”

“Marriage is a very serious thing, uncle. Suppose I were not to marry at all! Sometimes I think my brother is much more like marrying than I am.”

“You are bound to marry,” said the Earl solemnly. “And you are specially bound by every duty to God and man to make no marriage that will be disgraceful to the position which you are called upon to fill.”

“At any rate I will not do that,” said Fred Neville proudly. From this the Earl took some comfort, and then the interview was over.

On the day appointed by himself Fred left the Manor, and his mother and brother went on the following day. But after he was gone, on that same afternoon, Jack Neville asked Sophy Mellerby to be his wife. She refused him,—

with all the courtesy she knew how to use, but also with all the certainty. And as soon as he had left the house she told Lady Scroope what had happened.

## CHAPTER V.

### ARDKILL COTTAGE.

THE cliffs of Moher in Co. Clare, on the western coast of Ireland, are not as well known to tourists as they should be. It may be doubted whether Lady Mary Quin was right when she called them the highest cliffs in the world, but they are undoubtedly very respectable cliffs, and run up some six hundred feet from the sea as nearly perpendicular as cliffs should be. They are beautifully coloured, streaked with yellow veins, and with great masses of dark red rock; and beneath them lies the broad and blue Atlantic. Lady Mary's exaggeration as to the comparative height is here acknowledged, but had she said that below them rolls the brightest bluest clearest water

in the world she would not have been far wrong. To the south of these cliffs there runs inland a broad bay,—Liscannor bay, on the sides of which are two little villages, Liscannor and Lahinch. At the latter, Fred Neville, since he had been quartered at Ennis, had kept a boat for the sake of shooting seals and exploring the coast,—and generally carrying out his spirit of adventure. Not far from Liscannor was Castle Quin, the seat of the Earl of Kilfenora; and some way up from Liscannor towards the cliffs; about two miles from the village, there is a cottage called Ardkill. Here lived Mrs. and Miss O'Hara.

It was the nearest house to the rocks, from which it was distant less than half a mile. The cottage, so called, was a low rambling long house, but one storey high,—very unlike an English cottage. It stood in two narrow lengths, the one running at right angles to the other; and contained a large kitchen, two sitting rooms,—of which one was never used,—

and four or five bed-rooms of which only three were furnished. The servant girl occupied one, and the two ladies the others. It was a blank place enough,—and most unlike that sort of cottage which English ladies are supposed to inhabit, when they take to cottage life. There was no garden to it, beyond a small patch in which a few potatoes were planted. It was so near to the ocean, so exposed to winds from the Atlantic, that no shrubs would live there. Everything round it, even the herbage, was impregnated with salt, and told tales of the neighbouring waves. When the wind was from the west the air would be so laden with spray that one could not walk there without being wet. And yet the place was very healthy, and noted for the fineness of its air. Rising from the cottage, which itself stood high, was a steep hill running up to the top of the cliff, covered with that peculiar moss which the salt spray of the ocean produces. On this side the land was altogether open, but a few sheep were

always grazing there when the wind was not so high as to drive them to some shelter. Behind the cottage there was an enclosed paddock which belonged to it, and in which Mrs. O'Hara kept her cow. Roaming free around the house, and sometimes in it, were a dozen hens and a noisy old cock which, with the cow, made up the total of the widow's live stock. About a half a mile from the cottage on the way to Liscannor there were half a dozen mud cabins which contained Mrs. O'Hara's nearest neighbours,—and an old burying ground. Half a mile further on again was the priest's house, and then on to Liscannor there were a few other straggling cabins here and there along the road.

Up to the cottage indeed there could hardly be said to be more than a track, and beyond the cottage no more than a sheep path. The road coming out from Liscannor was a real road as far as the burying ground, but from thence onward it had degenerated. A car, or carriage if needed, might be brought up to



the cottage door, for the ground was hard and the way was open. But no wheels ever travelled there now. The priest, when he would come, came on horseback, and there was a shed in which he could tie up his nag. He himself from time to time would send up a truss of hay for his nag's use, and would think himself cruelly used because the cow would find her way in and eat it. No other horse ever called at the widow's door. What slender stores were needed for her use, were all brought on the girls' backs from Liscannor. To the north of the cottage, along the cliff, there was no road for miles, nor was there house or habitation. Castle Quin, in which the noble but somewhat impoverished Quin family lived nearly throughout the year, was distant, inland, about three miles from the cottage. Lady Mary had said in her letter to her friend that Mrs. O'Hara was a lady;— and as Mrs. O'Hara had no other neighbour, ranking with herself in that respect, so near

her, and none other but the Protestant clergyman's wife within six miles of her, charity, one would have thought, might have induced some of the Quin family to notice her. But the Quins were Protestant, and Mrs. O'Hara was not only a Roman Catholic, but a Roman Catholic who had been brought into the parish by the priest. No evil certainly was known of her, but then nothing was known of her; and the Quins were a very cautious people where religion was called in question. In the days of the famine Father Marty and the Earl and the Protestant vicar had worked together in the good cause;—but those days were now gone by, and the strange intimacy had soon died away. The Earl when he met the priest would bow to him, and the two clergymen would bow to each other;—but beyond such dumb salutation there was no intercourse between them. It had been held therefore to be impossible to take any notice of the priest's friends.

And what notice could have been taken of two ladies who came from nobody knew where, to live in that wild out-of-the-way place, nobody knew why? They called themselves mother and daughter, and they called themselves O'Haras;—but there was no evidence of the truth even of these assertions. They were left therefore in their solitude, and never saw the face of a friend across their door step except that of Father Marty.

In truth Mrs. O'Hara's life had been of a nature almost to necessitate such solitude. With her story we have nothing to do here. For our purpose there is no need that her tale should be told. Suffice it to say that she had been deserted by her husband, and did not now know whether she was or was not a widow. This was in truth the only mystery attached to her. She herself was an Englishwoman, though a Catholic; but she had been left early an orphan, and had been brought up in a provincial town of France by her

grandmother. There she had married a certain Captain O'Hara, she having some small means of her own sufficient to make her valuable in the eyes of an adventurer. At that time she was no more than eighteen, and had given her hand to the Captain in opposition to the wishes of her only guardian. What had been her life from that time to the period at which, under Father Marty's auspices, she became the inhabitant of Ardkill Cottage, no one knew but herself. She was then utterly dissevered from all friends and relatives, and appeared on the western coast of County Clare with her daughter, a perfect stranger to every one. Father Marty was an old man, now nearly seventy, and had been educated in France. There he had known Mrs. O'Hara's grandmother, and hence had arisen the friendship which had induced him to bring the lady into his parish. She came there with a daughter, then hardly more than a child. Between two and three years had passed since

her coming, and the child was now a grown-up girl, nearly nineteen years old. Of her means little or nothing was known accurately, even to the priest. She had told him that she had saved enough out of the wreck on which to live with her girl after some very humble fashion, and she paid her way. There must have come some sudden crash, or she would hardly have taken her child from an expensive Parisian school to vegetate in such solitude as that she had chosen. And it was a solitude from which there seemed to be no chance of future escape. They had brought with them a piano and a few books, mostly French;—and with these it seemed to have been intended that the two ladies should make their future lives endurable. Other resources except such as the scenery of the cliffs afforded them, they had none.

The author would wish to impress upon his readers, if it may be possible, some idea of the outward appearance and personal character of

each of these two ladies, as his story can hardly be told successfully unless he do so. The elder, who was at this time still under forty years of age, would have been a very handsome woman had not troubles, suffering, and the contests of a rugged life, in which she had both endured and dared much, given to her face a look of hard combative resolution which was not feminine. She was rather below than above the average height,—or at any rate looked to be so, as she was strongly made, with broad shoulders, and a waist that was perhaps not now as slender as when she first met Captain O'Hara. But her hair was still black,—as dark at least as hair can be which is not in truth black at all but only darkly brown. Whatever might be its colour there was no tinge of grey upon it. It was glossy, silken, and long as when she was a girl. I do not think that she took pride in it. How could she take pride in personal beauty, when she was never seen by any man



younger than Father Marty or the old peasant who brought turf to her door in creels on a donkey's back? But she wore it always without any cap, tied in a simple knot behind her head. Whether chignons had been invented then the author does not remember,—but they certainly had not become common on the coast of County Clare, and the peasants about Liscannor thought Mrs. O'Hara's head of hair the finest they had ever seen. Had the ladies Quin of the Castle possessed such hair as that, they would not have been the ladies Quin to this day. Her eyes were lustrous, dark, and very large,—beautiful eyes certainly; but they were eyes that you might fear. They had been softer perhaps in youth, before the spirit of the tiger had been roused in the woman's bosom by neglect and ill-usage. Her face was now bronzed by years and weather. Of her complexion she took no more care than did the neighbouring fishermen of theirs, and the winds and the salt water, and perhaps the



working of her own mind, had told upon it, to make it rough and dark. But yet there was a colour in her cheeks, as we often see in those of wandering gipsies, which would make a man stop to regard her who had eyes appreciative of beauty. Her nose was well formed,—a heaven-made nose, and not a lump of flesh stuck on to the middle of her face as women's noses sometimes are;—but it was somewhat short and broad at the nostrils, a nose that could imply much anger, and perhaps tenderness also. Her face below her nose was very short. Her mouth was large, but laden with expression. Her lips were full and her teeth perfect as pearls. Her chin was short and perhaps now verging to that size which we call a double chin, and marked by as broad a dimple as ever Venus made with her finger on the face of a woman.

She had ever been strong and active, and years in that retreat had told upon her not at all. She would still walk to Liscannor, and

thence round, when the tide was low, beneath the cliffs, and up by a path which the boys had made from the foot through the rocks to the summit, though the distance was over ten miles, and the ascent was very steep. She would remain for hours on the rocks, looking down upon the sea, when the weather was almost at its roughest. When the winds were still, and the sun was setting across the ocean, and the tame waves were only just audible as they rippled on the stones below, she would sit there with her child, holding the girl's hand or just touching her arm, and would be content so to stay almost without a word; but when the winds blew, and the heavy spray came up in blinding volumes, and the white-headed sea-monsters were roaring in their fury against the rocks, she would be there alone with her hat in her hand, and her hair drenched. She would watch the gulls wheeling and floating beneath her, and would listen to their screams and try to read their voices. She would envy the birds

as they seemed to be worked into madness by the winds which still were not strong enough to drive them from their purposes. To linger there among the rocks seemed to be the only delight left to her in life,—except that intense delight which a mother has in loving her child. She herself read but little, and never put a hand upon the piano. But she had a faculty of sitting and thinking, of brooding over her own past years and dreaming of her daughter's future life, which never deserted her. With her the days were doubtless very sad, but it cannot truly be said that they were dull or tedious.

And there was a sparkle of humour about her too, which would sometimes shine the brightest when there was no one by her to appreciate it. Her daughter would smile at her mother's sallies,—but she did so simply in kindness. Kate did not share her mother's sense of humour,—did not share it as yet. With the young the love of fun is gratified generally by

grotesque movement. It is not till years are running on that the grotesqueness of words and ideas is appreciated. But Mrs. O'Hara would expend her art on the household drudge, or on old Barney Corcoran who came with the turf,—though by neither of them was she very clearly understood. Now and again she would have a war of words with the priest, and that, I think, she liked. She was intensely combative, if ground for a combat arose; and would fight on any subject with any human being—except her daughter. And yet with the priest she never quarrelled; and though she was rarely beaten in her contests with him, she submitted to him in much. In matters touching her religion she submitted to him altogether.

Kate O'Hara was in face very like her mother;—strangely like, for in much she was very different. But she had her mother's eyes,—though hers were much softer in their lustre, as became her youth,—and she had her mother's nose, but without that look of scorn which

would come upon her mother's face when the nostrils were inflated. And in that peculiar shortness of the lower face she was the very echo of her mother. But the mouth was smaller, the lips less full, and the dimple less exaggerated. It was a fairer face to look upon,—fairer, perhaps, than her mother's had ever been ; but it was less expressive, and in it there was infinitely less capability for anger, and perhaps less capability for the agonising extremes of tenderness. But Kate was taller than her mother, and seemed by her mother's side to be slender. Nevertheless she was strong and healthy ; and though she did not willingly join in those longer walks, or expose herself to the weather as did her mother, there was nothing feeble about her, nor was she averse to action. Life at Ardkill Cottage was dull, and therefore she also was dull. Had she been surrounded by friends, such as she had known in her halcyon school days at Paris, she would have been the gayest of the gay.

Her hair was dark as her mother's,—even darker. Seen by the side of Miss O'Hara's, the mother's hair was certainly not black, but one could hardly think that hair could be blacker than the daughter's. But hers fell in curling clusters round her neck,—such clusters as now one never sees. She would shake them in sport, and the room would seem to be full of her locks. But she used to say herself to her mother that there was already to be found a grey hair among them now and again, and she would at times shew one, declaring that she would be an old woman before her mother was middle-aged.

Her life at Ardkill Cottage was certainly very dull. Memory did but little for her, and she hardly knew how to hope. She would read, till she had nearly learned all their books by heart, and would play such tunes as she knew by the hour together, till the poor instrument, subject to the sea air and away from any tuner's skill, was discordant with its limp strings. But still, with all this, her mind would become



vacant and weary. "Mother," she would say, "is it always to be like this?"

"Not always, Kate," the mother once answered.

"And when will it be changed?"

"In a few days,—in a few hours, Kate."

"What do you mean, mother?"

"That eternity is coming, with all its glory and happiness. If it were not so, it would, indeed, be very bad."

It may be doubted whether any human mind has been able to content itself with hopes of eternity, till distress in some shape has embittered life. The preachers preach very well,—well enough to leave many convictions on the minds of men; but not well enough to leave that conviction. And godly men live well,—but we never see them living as though such were their conviction. And were it so, who would strive and toil in this world? When the heart has been broken, and the spirit ground to the dust by misery, then,—such is God's mercy—



eternity suffices to make life bearable. When Mrs. O'Hara spoke to her daughter of eternity, there was but cold comfort in the word. The girl wanted something here,—pleasures, companions, work, perhaps a lover. This had happened before Lieutenant Neville of the 20th Hussars had been seen in those parts.

And the mother herself, in speaking as she had spoken, had, perhaps unintentionally, indulged in a sarcasm on life which the daughter certainly had not been intended to understand. “Yes ;—it will always be like this for you, for you, unfortunate one that you are. There is no other further look-out in this life. You are one of the wretched to whom the world offers nothing ; and therefore,—as, being human, you must hope,—build your hopes on eternity.” Had the words been read clearly, that would have been their true meaning. What could she do for her child ? Bread and meat, with a roof over her head, and raiment which sufficed for life such as theirs, she could

supply. The life would have been well enough had it been their fate, and within their power, to earn the bread and meat, the shelter and the raiment. But to have it, and without work,—to have that, and nothing more, in absolute idleness, was such misery that there was no resource left but eternity !

And yet the mother when she looked at her daughter almost persuaded herself that it need not be so. The girl was very lovely,—so lovely that, were she but seen, men would quarrel for her as to who should have her in his keeping. Such beauty, such life, such capability for giving and receiving enjoyment could not have been intended to wither on a lone cliff over the Atlantic ! There must be fault somewhere. But yet to live had been the first necessity ; and life in cities, among the haunts of men, had been impossible with such means as this woman possessed. When she had called her daughter to her, and had sought peace under the roof which her friend the priest had found for her,

peace and a roof to shelter her had been the extent of her desires. To be at rest, and independent, with her child within her arms, had been all that the woman asked of the gods. For herself it sufficed. For herself she was able to acknowledge that the rest which she had at least obtained was infinitely preferable to the unrest of her past life. But she soon learned,—as she had not expected to learn before she made the experiment,—that that which was to her peace, was to her daughter life within a tomb. “Mother, is it always to “be like this?”

Had her child not carried the weight of good blood, had some small grocer or country farmer been her father, she might have come down to the neighbouring town of Ennistimon, and found a fitting mate there. Would it not have been better so? From that weight of good blood,—or gift, if it please us to call it,—what advantage would ever come to her girl? It can not really be that all those who swarm in the world

below the bar of gentlehood are less blessed, or intended to be less blessed, than the few who float in the higher air. As to real blessedness, does it not come from fitness to the outer life and a sense of duty that shall produce such fitness? Does any one believe that the Countess has a greater share of happiness than the grocer's wife, or is less subject to the miseries which flesh inherits? But such matters cannot be changed by the will. This woman could not bid her daughter go and meet the butcher's son on equal terms, or seek her friends among the milliners of the neighbouring town. The burden had been imposed and must be borne, even though it isolated them from all the world.

“Mother, is it always to be like this?” Of course the mother knew what was needed. It was needed that the girl should go out into the world and pair, that she should find some shoulder on which she might lean, some arm that would be strong to surround her, the heart of some man and the work of some

man to which she might devote herself. The girl, when she asked her question, did not know this,—but the mother knew it. The mother looked at her child and said that of all living creatures her child was surely the loveliest. Was it not fit that she should go forth and be loved ;—that she should at any rate go forth and take her chance with others? But how should such going forth be managed? And then,—were there not dangers, terrible dangers,—dangers specially terrible to one so friendless as her child? Had not she herself been wrecked among the rocks, trusting herself to one who had been utterly unworthy,—loving one who had been utterly unlovely? Men so often are as ravenous wolves, merciless, rapacious, without hearts, full of greed, full of lust, looking on female beauty as prey, regarding the love of woman and her very life as a toy! Were she higher in the world there might be safety. Were she lower there might be safety. But how could she send her girl forth into the world

without sending her certainly among the wolves? And yet that piteous question was always sounding in her ears. "Mother, is it always to be "like this?"

Then Lieutenant Neville had appeared upon the scene, dressed in a sailor's jacket and trowsers, with a sailor's cap upon his head, with a loose handkerchief round his neck and his hair blowing to the wind. In the eyes of Kate O'Hara he was an Apollo. In the eyes of any girl he must have seemed to be as good-looking a fellow as ever tied a sailor's knot. He had made acquaintance with Father Marty at Liscannor, and the priest had dined with him at Ennis. There had been a return visit, and the priest, perhaps innocently, had taken him up on the cliffs. There he had met the two ladies, and our hero had been introduced to Kate O'Hara.



## CHAPTER VI.

I'LL GO BAIL SHE LIKES IT.

IT might be that the young man was a ravenous wolf, but his manners were not wolfish. Had Mrs. O'Hara been a princess, supreme in her own rights, young Neville could not have treated her or her daughter with more respect. At first Kate had wondered at him, but had said but little. She had listened to him, as he talked to her mother and the priest about the cliffs and the birds and the seals he had shot, and she had felt that it was this, something like this, that was needed to make life so sweet that as yet there need be no longing, no thought, for eternity. It was not that all at once she loved him, but she felt that he was a thing to love. His very appearance



on the cliff, and the power of thinking of him when he was gone, for a while banished all tedium from her life. "Why should you shoot the poor gulls?" That was the first question she asked him; and she asked it hardly in tenderness to the birds, but because with the unconscious cunning of her sex she understood that tenderness in a woman is a charm in the eyes of a man.

"Only because it is so difficult to get at them," said Fred. "I believe there is no other reason,—except that one must shoot something."

"But why must you?" asked Mrs. O'Hara.

"To justify one's guns. A man takes to shooting as a matter of course. It's a kind of institution. There ain't any tigers, and so we shoot birds. And in this part of the world there ain't any pheasants, and so we shoot sea-gulls."

"Excellently argued," said the priest.

"Or rather one don't, for it's impossible to

“get at them. But I'll tell you what, Father “Marty,”—Neville had already assumed the fashion of calling the priest by his familiar priestly name, as strangers do much more readily than they who belong to the country,—“I'll tell you what, Father Marty,—I've shot “one of the finest seals I ever saw, and if “Morony can get him at low water, I'll send “the skin up to Mrs. O'Hara.”

“And send the oil to me,” said the priest. “There's some use in shooting a seal. But you “can do nothing with those birds,—unless you “get enough of their feathers to make a bed.”

This was in October, and before the end of November Fred Neville was, after a fashion, intimate at the cottage. He had never broken bread at Mrs. O'Hara's table; nor, to tell the truth, had any outspoken, clearly intelligible word of love been uttered by him to the girl. But he had been seen with them often enough, and the story had become sufficiently current at Liscannor to make Lady Mary Quin think that

she was justified in sending her bad news to her friend Lady Scroope. This she did not do till Fred had been induced, with some difficulty, to pass a night at Castle Quin. Lady Mary had not scrupled to ask a question about Miss O'Hara, and had thought the answer very unsatisfactory. "I don't know what makes them live there, I'm sure. I should have thought you would have known that," replied Neville, in answer to her question.

"They are perfect mysteries to us," said Lady Mary.

"I think that Miss O'Hara is the prettiest girl I ever saw in my life," said Fred boldly, "and I should say the handsomest woman, if it were not that there may be a question between her and her mother."

"You are enthusiastic," said Lady Mary Quin, and after that the letter to Scroope was written.

In the meantime the seal-skin was cured,—not perhaps in the very best fashion, and was

sent up to Miss O'Hara, with Mr. Neville's compliments. The skin of a seal that has been shot by the man and not purchased is a present that any lady may receive from any gentleman. The most prudent mamma that ever watched over her dovecote with Argus eyes, permitting no touch of gallantry to come near it, could hardly insist that a seal-skin in the rough should be sent back to the donor. Mrs. O'Hara was by no means that most prudent mamma, and made, not only the seal-skin, but the donor also welcome. \* Must it not be that by some chance advent such as this that the change must be effected in her girl's life, should any change ever be made? And her girl was good. Why should she fear for her? The man had been brought there by her only friend, the priest, and why should she fear him? And yet she did fear; and though her face was never clouded when her girl spoke of the new comer, though she always mentioned Captain Neville's name as though she herself liked the man,

though she even was gracious to him when he shewed himself near the cottage,—still there was a deep dread upon her when her eyes rested upon him, when her thoughts flew to him. Men are wolves to women, and utterly merciless when feeding high their lust. 'Twas thus her own thoughts shaped themselves, though she never uttered a syllable to her daughter in disparagement of the man. This was the girl's chance. Was she to rob her of it? And yet, of all her duties, was not the duty of protecting her girl the highest and the dearest that she owned? If the man meant well by her girl, she would wash his feet with her hair, kiss the hem of his garments, and love the spot on which she had first seen him stand like a young sea-god. But if evil,—if he meant evil to her girl, if he should do evil to her Kate,—then she knew that there was so much of the tiger within her bosom as would serve to rend him limb from limb. With such thoughts as these she had hardly ever left them together. Nor had such

leaving together seemed to be desired by them. As for Kate she certainly would have shunned it. She thought of Fred Neville during all her waking moments, and dreamed of him at night. His coming had certainly been to her as the coming of a god. Though he did not appear on the cliffs above once or twice a week, and had done so but for a few weeks, his presence had altered the whole tenour of her life. She never asked her mother now whether it was to be always like this. There was a freshness about her life which her mother understood at once. She was full of play, reading less than was her wont, but still with no sense of tedium. Of the man in his absence she spoke but seldom, and when his name was on her lips she would jest with it,—as though the coming of a young embryo lord to shoot gulls on their coast was quite a joke. The seal-skin which he had given her was very dear to her, and she was at no pains to hide her liking; but of the man as a lover she had never seemed to think.



Nor did she think of him as a lover. It is not by such thinking that love grows. Nor did she ever tell herself that while he was there, coming on one day and telling them that his boat would be again there on another, life was blessed to her, and that, therefore, when he should have left them, her life would be accursed to her. She knew nothing of all this. But yet she thought of him, and dreamed of him, and her young head was full of little plans with every one of which he was connected.

And it may almost be said that Fred Neville was as innocent in the matter as was the girl. It is true, indeed, that men are merciless as wolves to women,—that they become so, taught by circumstances and trained by years; but the young man who begins by meaning to be a wolf must be bad indeed. Fred Neville had no such meaning. On his behalf it must be acknowledged that he had no meaning whatever when he came again and again to Ardkill. Had he examined himself in the matter he would have



declared that he liked the mother quite as well as the daughter. When Lady Mary Quin had thrown at him her very blunt arrow he had defended himself on that plea. Accident, and the spirit of adventure, had thrust these ladies in his path, and no doubt he liked them the better because they did not live as other people lived. Their solitude, the close vicinity of the ocean, the feeling that in meeting them none of the ordinary conventional usages of society were needed, the wildness and the strangeness of the scene, all had charms which he admitted to himself. And he knew that the girl was very lovely. Of course he said so to himself and to others. To take delight in beauty is assumed to be the nature of a young man, and this young man was not one to wish to differ from others in that respect. But when he went back to spend his Christmas at Scroope, he had never told even himself that he intended to be her lover.

“Good-bye, Mrs. O’Hara,” he said, a day or two before he left Ennis.

“So you’re going?”

“Oh yes, I’m off. The orders from home  
“are imperative. One has to cut one’s lump  
“of Christmas beef and also one’s lump of  
“Christmas pudding. It is our family religion,  
“you know.”

“What a happiness to have a family to  
“visit!”

“It’s all very well, I suppose. I don’t  
“grumble. Only it’s a bore going away, some-  
“how.”

“You are coming back to Ennis?” asked  
Kate.

“Coming back;—I should think so. Barney  
“Morony wouldn’t be quite so quiet if I was  
“not coming back. I’m to dine with Father  
“Marty at Liscannor on the 15th of January,  
“to meet another priest from Milltown Malbay,  
“—the best fellow in the world he says.”

“That’s Father Creech;—not half such a good  
“fellow, Mr. Neville, as Father Marty himself.”

“He couldn’t be better. However, I shall

“be here then, and if I have any luck you shall  
“have another skin of the same size by that  
“time.” Then he shook hands with them both,  
and there was a feeling that the time would be  
blank till he should be again there in his sailor’s  
jacket.

When the second week in January had come  
Mrs. O’Hara heard that the gallant young officer  
of the 20th was back in Ennis, and she well  
remembered that he had told her of his intention  
to dine with the priest. On the Sunday she saw  
Mr. Marty after mass, and managed to have a  
few words with him on the road while Kate  
returned to the cottage alone. “So your friend  
“Mr. Neville has come back to Ennis,” she  
said.

“I didn’t know that he had come. He  
“promised to dine with me on Thursday,—only  
“I think nothing of promises from these young  
“fellows.”

“He told me he was to be with you.”

“More power to him. He’ll be welcome:

“ I’m getting to be a very ould man, Misthress O’Hara; but I’m not so ould but I like to have the young ones near me.”

“ It is pleasant to see a bright face like his.”

“ That’s throe for you, Misthress O’Hara. I like to see ’em bright and ganial. I don’t know that I ever shot so much as a sparrow, meself, but I love to hear them talk of their shootings, and huntings, and the like of that. I’ve taken a fancy to that boy, and he might do pretty much as he plazes wid me.”

“ And I too have taken a fancy to him, Father Marty.”

“ Shure and how could you help it ? ”

“ But he mustn’t do as he pleases with me.” Father Marty looked up into her face as though he did not understand her. “ If I were alone, as you are, I could afford, like you, to indulge in the pleasure of a bright face. Only in that case he would not care to let me see it.”

“ Bedad thin, Misthress O’Hara, I don’t know a fairer face to look on in all Corcomroe than

“your own,—that is when you’re not in your  
“tantrums, Misthress O’Hara.” The priest was  
a privileged person, and could say what he liked  
to his friend ; and she understood that a priest  
might say without fault what would be very  
faulty if it came from any one else.

“ I’m in earnest now, Father Marty. What  
“shall we do if our darling Kate thinks of this  
“young man more than is good for her?”  
Father Marty raised his hat and began to  
scratch his head. “If you like to look at the  
“fair face of a handsome lad ——”

“ I do thin, Misthress O’Hara.”

“ Must not she like it also ? ”

“ I’ll go bail she likes it,” said the priest.

“ And what will come next ? ”

“ I’ll tell you what it is, Misthress O’Hara.  
“ Would you want to keep her from even seeing  
“ a man at all ? ”

“ God forbid.”

“ It’s not the way to make them happy, nor  
“ yet safe. If it’s to be that way wid her,

“she’d better be a nun all out; and I’d be far  
“from proposing that to your Kate.”

“She is hardly fit for so holy a life.”

“And why should she? I niver like seeing  
“too many of ’em going that way, and them  
“that are prittiest are the last I’d send there.  
“But if not a nun, it stands to reason she must  
“take chance with the rest of ’em. She’s been  
“too much shut up already. Let her keep her  
“heart till he asks her for it; but if he does  
“ask her, why shouldn’t she be his wife? How  
“many of them young officers take Irish wives  
“home with ’em every year. Only for them,  
“our beauties wouldn’t have a chance.”

## CHAPTER VII.

### FATHER MARTY'S HOSPITALITY.

SUCH was the philosophy, or, perhaps, it may be better said such was the humanity of Father Marty! But in encouraging Mrs. O'Hara to receive this dangerous visitor he had by no means spoken without consideration. In one respect we must abandon Father Marty to the judgment and censure of fathers and mothers. The whole matter looked at from Lady Scroope's point of view was no doubt very injurious to the priest's character. He regarded a stranger among them, such as was Fred Neville, as fair spoil, as a Philistine to seize whom and capture him for life on behalf of any Irish girl would be a great triumph;—a spoiling of the Egyptian to the accomplishment of which he would not



hesitate to lend his priestly assistance, the end to be accomplished, of course, being marriage. For Lord Scroope and his family and his blood and his religious fanaticism he could entertain no compassion whatever. Father Marty was no great politician, and desired no rebellion against England. Even in the days of O'Connell and repeal he had been but lukewarm. But justice for Ireland in the guise of wealthy English husbands for pretty Irish girls he desired with all his heart. He was true to his own faith, to the backbone, but he entertained no prejudice against a good looking Protestant youth when a fortunate marriage was in question. So little had been given to the Irish in these days, that they were bound to take what they could get. Lord Scroope and the Countess, had they known the priest's views on this matter, would have regarded him as an unscrupulous intriguing ruffian, prepared to destroy the happiness of a noble family by a wicked scheme. But his views of life, as

judged from the other side, admitted of some excuse. As for a girl breaking her heart, he did not, perhaps, much believe in such a catastrophe. Of a sore heart a girl must run the chance,—as also must a man. That young men do go about promising marriage and not keeping their promise, he knew well. None could know that better than he did, for he was the repository of half the love secrets in his parish. But all that was part of the evil coming from the fall of Adam, and must be endured till,—till the Pope should have his own again, and be able to set all things right. In the meantime young women must do the best they could to keep their lovers;—and should one lover break away, then must the deserted one use her experience towards getting a second. But how was a girl to have a lover at all, if she were never allowed to see a man? He had been bred a priest from his youth upwards, and knew nothing of love; but nevertheless it was a pain to him to see a young

girl, good-looking, healthy, fit to be the mother of children, pine away, unsought for, uncoupled, —as it would be a pain to see a fruit grow ripe upon the tree, and then fall and perish for the want of plucking. His philosophy was perhaps at fault, and it may be that his humanity was unrefined. But he was human to the core, —and, at any rate, unselfish. That there might be another danger was a fact that he looked full in the face. But what victory can be won without danger? And he thought that he knew this girl, who three times a year would open her whole heart to him in confession. He was sure that she was not only innocent, but good. And of the man, too, he was prone to believe good;—though who on such a question ever trusts a man's goodness? There might be danger and there must be discretion; but surely it would not be wise, because evil was possible, that such a one as Kate O'Hara should be kept from all that intercourse without which a woman is only half a woman! He had con-

sidered it all, though the reader may perhaps think that as a minister of the gospel he had come to a strange conclusion. He himself, in his own defence, would have said that having served many years in the ministry he had learned to know the nature of men and women.

Mrs. O'Hara said not a word to Kate of the doctrines which the priest had preached, but she found herself encouraged to mention their new friend's name to the girl. During Fred's absence hardly a word had been spoken concerning him in the cottage. Mrs. O'Hara had feared the subject, and Kate had thought of him much too often to allow his name to be on her tongue. But now as they sat after dinner over their peat fire the mother began the subject. "Mr. Neville is to dine with "Father Marty on Thursday."

"Is he, mother?"

"Barney Morony was telling me that he was "back at Ennis. Barney had to go in and see "him about the boat."

“He won’t go boating such weather as this, mother?”

“It seems that he means it. The winds are not so high now as they were in October, and the men understand well when the sea will be high.”

“It is frightful to think of anybody being in one of those little boats now.” Kate ever since she had lived in these parts had seen the canoes from Liscannor and Lahinch about in the bay, summer and winter, and had never found anything dreadful in it before.

“I suppose he’ll come up here again,” said the mother; but to this Kate made no answer. “He is to sleep at Father Marty’s I fancy, and he can hardly do that without paying us a visit.”

“The days are short and he’ll want all his time for the boating,” said Kate with a little pout.

“He’ll find half-an-hour, I don’t doubt. Shall you be glad to see him, Kate?”

“I don't know, mother. One is glad almost  
“to see any one up here. It's as good as a  
“treat when old Corcoran comes up with the  
“turf.”

“But Mr. Neville is not like old Corcoran,  
“Kate.”

“Not in the least, mother. I do like Mr.  
“Neville better than Corcoran, because you see  
“with Corcoran the excitement is very soon  
“over. And Corcoran hasn't very much to say  
“for himself.”

“And Mr. Neville has?”

“He says a great deal more to you than he  
“does to me, mother.”

“I like him very much. I should like him  
“very much indeed if there were no danger in  
“his coming.”

“What danger?”

“That he should steal your heart away, my  
“own, my darling, my child.” Then Kate,  
instead of answering, got up and threw herself  
at her mother's knees, and buried her face in



her mother's lap, and Mrs. O'Hara knew that that act of larceny had already been perpetrated.

And how should it have been otherwise? But of such stealing it is always better that no mention should be made till the theft has been sanctified by free gift. Till the loss has been spoken of and acknowledged, it may in most cases be recovered. Had Neville never returned from Scroope, and his name never been mentioned by the mother to her daughter, it may be that Kate O'Hara would not have known that she had loved him. For a while she would have been sad. For a month or two, as she lay wakeful in her bed she would have thought of her dreams. But she would have thought of them as only dreams. She would have been sure that she could have loved him had any fair ending been possible for such love; but she would have assured herself that she had been on her guard, and that she was safe in spite of her dreams. But now the flame in her heart had been confessed and in some degree



sanctioned, and she would foster it rather than quench it. Even should such a love be capable of no good fortune, would it not be better to have a few weeks of happy dreaming than a whole life that should be passionless? What could she do with her own heart there, living in solitude, with none but the sea gulls to look at her? Was it not infinitely better that she should give it away to such a young god as this than let it feed upon itself miserably? Yes, she would give it away;—but might it not be that the young god would not take the gift?

On the third day after his arrival at Ennis, Neville was at Liscannor with the priest. He little dreamed that the fact of his dining and sleeping at Father Marty's house, would be known to the ladies at Castle Quin, and communicated from them to his aunt at Scroope Manor. Not that he would have been deterred from accepting the priest's hospitality or frightened into accepting that of the noble owner of the castle, had he known precisely all that would

be written about it. He would not have altered his conduct in a matter in which he considered himself entitled to regulate it, in obedience to any remonstrances from Scroope Manor. Objections to the society of a Roman Catholic priest because of his religion he would have regarded as old-fashioned fanaticism. As for Earls and their daughters he would no doubt have enough of them in his future life, and this special Earl and his daughters had not fascinated him. He had chosen to come to Ireland with his regiment for this year instead of at once assuming the magnificence of his position in England, in order that he might indulge the spirit of adventure before he assumed the duties of life. And it seemed to him that in dining and sleeping at an Irish priest's house on the shores of the Atlantic, with the prospect of seal shooting and seeing a very pretty girl on the following morning, he was indulging that spirit properly. But Lady Mary Quin thought that he was misbehaving himself and taking to

very bad courses. When she heard that he was to sleep at the priest's house, she was quite sure that he would visit Mrs. O'Hara on the next day.

The dinner at the priest's was very jovial. There was a bottle of sherry and there was a bottle of port, procured, chiefly for the sake of appearance, from a grocer's shop at Ennistimon;—but the whiskey had come from Cork and had been in the priest's keeping for the last dozen years. He good-humouredly acknowledged that the wine was nothing, but expressed an opinion that Mr. Neville might find it difficult to beat the “sperrits.” “It's throe for you, Father “Marty,” said the rival priest from Milltown Malbay, “and it's you that should know good “sperrits from bad if ony man in Ireland “does.”

“Deed thin,” replied the priest of Liscannor, “barring the famine years, I've mixed two “tumblers of punch for meself every day these “forty years, and if it was all together it'd be

“about enough to give Mr. Neville a day’s “sale-shooting on in his canoe.” Immediately after dinner Neville was invited to light his cigar, and everything was easy, comfortable, and to a certain degree adventurous. There were the two priests, and a young Mr. Finucane from Ennistimon,—who however was not quite so much to Fred’s taste as the elder men. Mr. Finucane wore various rings, and talked rather largely about his father’s demesne. But the whole thing was new, and by no means dull. As Neville had not left Ennis till late in the day,—after what he called a hard day’s work in the warrior line,—they did not sit down till past eight o’clock; nor did any one talk of moving till past midnight. Fred certainly made for himself more than two glasses of punch, and he would have sworn that the priest had done so also. Father Marty, however, was said by those who knew him best to be very rigid in this matter, and to have the faculty of making his drink go a long way.

Young Mr. Finucane took three or four,—perhaps five or six,—and then volunteered to join Fred Neville in a day's shooting under the rocks. But Fred had not been four years in a cavalry regiment without knowing how to protect himself in such a difficulty as this. "The canoe will only hold myself and the man," said Fred, with perfect simplicity. Mr. Finucane drew himself up haughtily and did not utter another word for the next five minutes. Nevertheless he took a most affectionate leave of the young officer when half an hour after midnight he was told by Father Marty that it was time for him to go home. Father Creech also took his leave, and then Fred and the priest of Liscannor were left sitting together over the embers of the turf fire. "You'll be going up to see our friends at Ardkill to-morrow," said the priest.

"Likely enough, Father Marty."

"In course you will. Sorrow a doubt of that." Then the priest paused.

“And why shouldn't I?” asked Neville.

“I'm not saying that you shouldn't, Mr. Neville. It wouldn't be civil nor yet nathural after knowing them as you have done. If you didn't go they'd be thinking there was a rason for your staying away, and that'd be worse than all. But, Mr. Neville——”

“Out with it, Father Marty.” Fred knew what was coming fairly well, and he also had thought a good deal upon the matter.

“Them two ladies, Mr. Neville, live up there all alone, with sorrow a human being in the world to protect them,—barring myself.”

“Why should they want protection?”

“Just because they're lone women, and because one of them is very young and very beautiful.”

“They are both beautiful,” said Neville.

“Deed and they are,—both of 'em. The mother can look afther herself, and after a fashion, too, she can look afther her daughter. I shouldn't like to be the man to come in



“her way when he'd once deceived her child.

“You're a young man, Mr. Neville.”

“That's my misfortune.”

“And one who stands very high in the world.

“They tell me you're to be a great lord some  
“day.”

“Either that or a little one,” said Neville,  
laughing.

“Anyways you'll be a rich man with a  
“handle to your name. To me, living here in  
“this out of the way parish, a lord doesn't  
“matter that.” And Father Marty gave a flip  
with his fingers. “The only lord that matters  
“me is me bishop. But with them women  
“yonder, the title and the money and all the  
“grandeur goes a long way. It has been so  
“since the world began. In riding a race  
“against you they carry weight from the very  
“awe which the name of an English Earl brings  
“with it.”

“Why should they ride a race against me?”

“Why indeed,—unless you ride a race



“against them! You wouldn’t wish to injure  
“that young thing as isn’t yet out of her teens?”

“God forbid that I should injure her.”

“I don’t think that you’re the man to do it  
“with your eyes open, Mr. Neville. If you  
“can’t spake her fair in the way of making her  
“your wife, don’t spake her fair at all. That’s  
“the long and the short of it, Mr. Neville.  
“You see what they are. They’re ladies, if  
“there is a lady living in the Queen’s domi-  
“nions. That young thing is as beautiful as  
“Habe, as innocent as a sleeping child, as soft  
“as wax to take impression. What armour  
“has she got against such a one as you?”

“She shall not need armour.”

“If you’re a gentleman, Mr. Neville,—as I  
“know you are,—you will not give her occasion  
“to find out her own wakeness. Well, if it  
“isn’t past one I’m a sinner. It’s Friday morn-  
“ing and I mus’n’t ate a morsel myself, poor  
“papist that I am; but I’ll get you a bit of cold  
“mate and a drop of grog in a moment if you’ll

“take it.” Neville, however, refused the hospitable offer.

“Father Marty,” he said, speaking with a zeal which perhaps owed something of its warmth to the punch, “you shall find that I am a gentleman.”

“I’m shure of it, my boy.”

“If I can do no good to your friend, at any rate I will do no harm to her.”

“That is spoken like a Christian, Mr. Neville, —which I take to be a higher name even than gentleman.”

“There’s my hand upon it,” said Fred, enthusiastically. After that he went to bed.

On the following morning the priest was very jolly at breakfast, and in speaking of the ladies at Ardkill made no allusion whatever to the conversation of the previous evening. “Ah no,” he said, when Neville proposed that they should walk up together to the cottage before he went down to his boat. “What’s the good of an ould man like me going bothering? And, signs

“on, I’m going into Ennistimon to see Pat  
“O’Leary about the milk he’s sending to our  
“Union. The thief of the world,—it’s wather-  
“ing it he is before he sends it. Nothing kills  
“me, Mr. Neville, but when I hear of all them  
“English vices béing brought over to this poor  
“suffering innocent counthry.”

Neville had decided on the advice of Barney Morony, that he would on this morning go down southward along the coast to Drumdeirg rock, in the direction away from the Hag’s Head and from Mrs. O’Hara’s cottage; and he therefore postponed his expedition till after his visit. When Father Marty started to Ennistimon to look after that sinner O’Leary, Fred Neville, all alone, turned the other way to Ard-kill.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO GO.

MRS. O'HARA had known that he would come, and Kate had known it; and, though it would be unfair to say that they were waiting for him, it is no more than true to say that they were ready for him. "We are so glad to see you again," said Mrs. O'Hara.

"Not more glad than I am to find myself here once more."

"So you dined and slept at Father Marty's last night. What will the grand people say at the Castle?"

"As I sha'n't hear what they say, it won't matter much! Life is not long enough, Mrs. O'Hara, for putting up with disagreeable people."

“Was it pleasant last night?”

“Very pleasant. I don’t think Father Creech  
“is half as good as Father Marty, you know.”

“Oh no,” exclaimed Kate.

“But he’s a jolly sort of fellow, too. And  
“there was a Mr. Finucane there,—a very  
“grand fellow.”

“We know no one about here but the  
“priests,” said Mrs. O’Hara, laughing. “Any-  
“body might think that the cottage was a  
“little convent.”

“Then I oughtn’t to come.”

“Well, no, I suppose not. Only foreigners  
“are admitted to see convents sometimes.  
“You’re going after the poor seals again?”

“Barney says the tide is too high for the  
“seals now. We’re going to Drumdeirg.”

“What,—to those little rocks?” asked Kate.

“Yes,—to the rocks. I wish you’d both come  
“with me.”

“I wouldn’t go in one of those canoes all out  
“there for the world,” said Kate.

“What can be the use of it?” asked Mrs. O’Hara.

“I’ve got to get the feathers for Father Marty’s bed, you know. I haven’t shot as many yet as would make a pillow for a cradle.”

“The poor innocent gulls!”

“The poor innocent chickens and ducks, if you come to that, Miss O’Hara.”

“But they’re of use.”

“And so will Father Marty’s feather bed be of use. Good-bye, Mrs. O’Hara. Good-bye, Miss O’Hara. I shall be down again next week, and we’ll have that other seal.”

There was nothing in this. So far, at any rate, he had not broken his word to the priest. He had not spoken a word to Kate O’Hara, that might not and would not have been said had the priest been present. But how lovely she was; and what a thrill ran through his arm as he held her hand in his for a moment. Where should he find a girl like that in England with



such colour, such eyes, such hair, such innocence,  
—and then with so sweet a voice ?

As he hurried down the hill to the beach at Coolroone, where Morony was to meet him with the boat, he could not keep himself from comparisons between Kate O'Hara and Sophie Mellerby. No doubt his comparisons were made very incorrectly,—and unfairly ; but they were all in favour of the girl who lived out of the world in solitude on the cliffs of Moher. And why should he not be free to seek a wife where he pleased ? In such an affair as that,—an affair of love in which the heart and the heart alone should be consulted, what right could any man have to dictate to him ? Certain ideas occurred to him which his friends in England would have called wild, democratic, revolutionary and damnable, but which, owing perhaps to the Irish air and the Irish whiskey and the spirit of adventure fostered by the vicinity of rocks and ocean, appeared to him at the moment to be not only charming but reason-

able also. No doubt he was born to high state and great rank, but nothing that his rank and state could give him was so sweet as his liberty. To be free to choose for himself in all things, was the highest privilege of man. What pleasure could he have in a love which should be selected for him by such a woman as his aunt? Then he gave the reins to some confused notion of an Irish bride, a wife who should be half a wife and half not,—whom he would love and cherish tenderly but of whose existence no English friend should be aware. How could he more charmingly indulge his spirit of adventure than by some such arrangement as this?

He knew that he had given a pledge to his uncle to contract no marriage that would be derogatory to his position. He knew also that he had given a pledge to the priest that he would do no harm to Kate O'Hara. He felt that he was bound to keep each pledge. As for that sweet, darling girl, would he not sooner lose his life than harm her? But he was aware that

an adventurous life was always a life of difficulties, and that for such as live adventurous lives the duty of overcoming difficulties was of all duties the chief. Then he got into his canoe, and, having succeeded in killing two gulls on the Drumdeing rocks, thought that for that day he had carried out his purpose as a man of adventure very well.

During February and March he was often on the coast, and hardly one visit did he make which was not followed by a letter from Castle Quin to Scroope Manor. No direct accusation of any special fault was made against him in consequence. No charge was brought of an improper hankering after any special female, because Lady Scroope found herself bound in conscience not to commit her correspondent; but very heavy injunctions were laid upon him as to his general conduct, and he was eagerly entreated to remember his great duty and to come home and settle himself in England. In the mean time the ties which bound him

to the coast of Clare were becoming stronger and stronger every day. He had ceased now to care much about seeing Father Marty, and would come, when the tide was low, direct from Lahinch to the strand beneath the cliffs, from whence there was a path through the rocks up to Ardkill. And there he would remain for hours,—having his gun with him, but caring little for his gun. He told himself that he loved the rocks and the wildness of the scenery, and the noise of the ocean, and the whirring of the birds above and below him. It was certainly true that he loved Kate O'Hara.

“Neville, you must answer me a question,” said the mother to him one morning when they were out together, looking down upon the Atlantic when the wind had lulled after a gale.

“Ask it then,” said he.

“What is the meaning of all this? What is Kate to believe?”

“Of course she believes that I love her better

“than all the world besides,—that she is more  
“to me than all the world can give or take. I  
“have told her at least, so often, that if she does  
“not believe it she is little better than a  
“Jew.”

“You must not joke with me now. If you  
“knew what it was to have one child and only  
“that you would not joke with me.”

“I am quite in earnest. I am not joking.”

“And what is to be the end of it?”

“The end of it! How can I say? My uncle  
“is an old man,—very old, very infirm, very  
“good, very prejudiced, and broken-hearted be-  
“cause his own son, who died, married against  
“his will.”

“You would not liken my Kate to such as that  
“woman was?”

“Your Kate! She is my Kate as much as  
“yours. Such a thought as that would be an in-  
“jury to me as deep as to you. You know that to  
“me my Kate, our Kate, is all excellencè,—as  
“pure and good as she is bright and beautiful.

“As God is above us she shall be my wife,—  
“but I cannot take her to Scroope Manor as my  
“wife while my uncle lives.”

“Why should any one be ashamed of her at  
“Scroope Manor?”

“Because they are fools. But I cannot cure  
“them of their folly. My uncle thinks that  
“I should marry one of my own class.”

“Class;—what class? He is a gentleman,  
“I presume, and she is a lady.”

“That is very true;—so true that I myself  
“shall act upon the truth. But I will not  
“make his last years wretched. He is a Pro-  
“testant, and you are Catholics.”

“What is that? Are not ever so many of  
“your lords Catholics? Were they not all  
“Catholics before Protestants were ever thought  
“of?”

“Mrs. O'Hara, I have told you that to me  
“she is as high and good and noble as though  
“she were a Princess. And I have told you  
“that she shall be my wife. If that does not



“content you, I cannot help it. It contents her. I owe much to her.”

“Indeed you do ;—everything.”

“But I owe much to him also. I do not think that you can gain anything by quarrelling with me.”

She paused for a while before she answered him, looking into his face the while with something of the ferocity of a tigress. So intent was her gaze that his eyes quailed beneath it. “By the living God,” she said, “if you injure my child I will have the very blood from your heart.”

Nevertheless she allowed him to return alone to the house, where she knew that he would find her girl. “Kate,” he said, going into the parlour in which she was sitting idle at the window,—“dear Kate.”

“Well, sir ?”

“I’m off.”

“You are always—off, as you call it.”

“Well,—yes. But I’m not on and off, as the saying is.”

“Why should you go away now?”

“Do you suppose a soldier has got nothing  
“to do? You never calculate, I think, that  
“Ennis is about three-and-twenty miles from  
“here. Come, Kate, be nice with me before  
“I go.”

“How can I be nice when you are going? I  
“always think when I see you go that you will  
“never come back to me again. I don't know  
“why you should come back to such a place as  
“this?”

“Because, as it happens, the place holds  
“what I love best in all the world.” Then  
he lifted her from her chair, and put his arm  
round her waist. “Do you not know that I  
“love you better than all that the world  
“holds?”

“How can I know it?”

“Because I swear it to you.”

“I think that you like me—a little. Oh  
“Fred, if you were to go and never to come  
“back I should die. Do you remember

“Mariana? ‘My life is dreary. He cometh  
“‘not,’ she said. She said, ‘I am aweary,  
“‘aweary; I would that I were dead!’ Do  
“you remember that? What has mother been  
“saying to you?”

“She has been bidding me to do you no  
“harm. It was not necessary. I would sooner  
“pluck out my eye than hurt you. My uncle  
“is an old man,—a very old man. She cannot  
“understand that it is better that we should  
“wait, than that I should have to think  
“hereafter that I had killed him by my un-  
“kindness.”

“But he wants you to love some other  
girl.”

“He cannot make me do that. All the world  
“cannot change my heart, Kate. If you can-  
“not trust me for that, then you do not love me  
“as I love you.”

“Oh, Fred, you know I love you. I do  
“trust you. Of course I can wait, if I only  
“know that you will come back to me. I only

“want to see you.” He was now leaning over her, and her cheek was pressed close to his. Though she was talking of Mariana, and pretending to fear future misery, all this was Elysium to her,—the very joy of Paradise. She could sit and think of him now from morning to night, and never find the day an hour too long. She could remember the words in which he made his oaths to her, and cherish the sweet feeling of his arm round her body. To have her cheek close to his was godlike. And then when he would kiss her, though she would rebuke him, it was as though all heaven were in the embrace.

“And now good-bye. One kiss, darling.”

“No.”

“Not a kiss when I am going?”

“I don’t want you to go. Oh, Fred! Well; —there. Good-bye, my own, own, own beloved one. You’ll be here on Monday?”

“Yes,—on Monday.”

“And be in the boat four hours, and here

“four minutes. Don’t I know you?” But he went without answering this last accusation.

“What shall we do, Kate, if he deceives us?” said the mother that evening.

“Die. But I am sure he will not deceive “us.”

Neville, as he made his way down to Liscannor, where his gig was waiting for him, did ask himself some serious questions about his adventure. What must be the end of it? And had he not been imprudent? It may be declared on his behalf that no idea of treachery to the girl ever crossed his mind. He loved her too thoroughly for that. He did love her—not perhaps as she loved him. He had many things in the world to occupy his mind, and she had but one. He was almost a god to her. She to him was simply the sweetest girl that he had ever as yet seen, and one who had that peculiar merit that she was all his own. No other man had ever pressed her hand, or drank her sweet breath. Was not such a love a

thousand times sweeter than that of some girl who had been hurried from drawing-room to drawing-room, and perhaps from one vow of constancy to another for half-a-dozen years? The adventure was very sweet. But how was it to end? His uncle might live these ten years, and he had not the heart,—nor yet the courage,—to present her to his uncle as his bride.

When he reached Ennis that evening there was a despatch marked “Immediate,” from his aunt Lady Scroope. “Your uncle is very ill;—dangerously ill, we fear. His great desire is to see you once again. Pray come without losing an hour.”

Early on the following morning he started for Dublin, but before he went to bed that night he not only wrote to Kate O'Hara, but enclosed the note from his aunt. He could understand that though the tidings of his uncle's danger was a shock to him there would be something in the tidings which would cause



joy to the two inmates of Ardkill Cottage. When he sent that letter with his own, he was of course determined that he would marry Kate O'Hara as soon as he was a free man.

## CHAPTER IX.

### FRED NEVILLE RETURNS TO SCROOPE.

THE suddenness of the demand made for the heir's presence at Scroope was perhaps not owing to the Earl's illness alone. The Earl, indeed, was ill,—so ill that he thought himself that his end was very near; but his illness had been brought about chiefly by the misery to which he had been subjected by the last despatch from Castle Quin to the Countess. “I am most unwilling,” she said, “to make mischief or to give unnecessary pain to you or to Lord Scroope; but I think it my duty to let you know that the general opinion about here is that Mr. Neville shall make Miss O'Hara his wife,—*if he has not done so already.* The most dangerous feature in the

“ whole matter is that it is all managed by the  
“ priest of this parish, a most unscrupulous  
“ person, who would do anything,—he is so  
“ daring. We have known him many many  
“ years, and we know to what lengths he would  
“ go. The laws have been so altered in favour  
“ of the Roman Catholics, and against the  
“ Protestants, that a priest can do almost just  
“ what he likes. I do not think that he would  
“ scruple for an instant to marry them if he  
“ thought it likely that his prey would escape  
“ from him. My own opinion is that there has  
“ been no marriage as yet, though I know that  
“ others think that there has been.” The  
expression of this opinion from “ others ” which  
had reached Lady Mary’s ears consisted of an  
assurance from her own Protestant lady’s-maid  
that that wicked guzzling old Father Marty  
would marry the young couple as soon as look  
at them, and very likely had done so already.  
“ I cannot say,” continued Lady Mary, “ that I  
“ actually know anything against the character

“ of Miss O’Hara. Of the mother we have very  
 “ strange stories here. They live in a little  
 “ cottage with one maid-servant, almost upon  
 “ the cliffs, and nobody knows anything about  
 “ them except the priest. If he should be  
 “ seduced into a marriage, nothing could be  
 “ more unfortunate.” Lady Mary probably  
 intended to insinuate that were young Neville  
 prudently to get out of the adventure, simply  
 leaving the girl behind him blasted, ruined, and  
 destroyed, the matter no doubt would be bad ;  
 but in that case the great misfortune would  
 have been avoided. She could not quite say  
 this in plain words ; but she felt, no doubt, that  
 Lady Scroope would understand her. Then  
 Lady Mary went on to assure her friend that  
 though she and her father and sisters very  
 greatly regretted that Mr. Neville had not again  
 given them the pleasure of seeing him at Castle  
 Quin, no feeling of injury on that score had  
 induced her to write so strongly as she had  
 done. She had been prompted to do so,

simply by her desire to prevent *a most ruinous alliance.*

Lady Scroope acknowledged entirely the truth of these last words. Such an alliance would be most ruinous! But what could she do? Were she to write to Fred and tell him all that she heard,—throwing to the winds Lady Mary's stupid injunctions respecting secrecy, as she would not have scrupled to do could she have thus obtained her object,—might it not be quite possible that she would precipitate the calamity which she desired so eagerly to avoid? Neither had she nor had her husband any power over the young man, except such as arose from his own good feeling. The Earl could not disinherit him;—could not put a single acre beyond his reach. Let him marry whom he might he must be Earl Scroope of Scroope, and the woman so married must be the Countess of Scroope. There was already a Lady Neville about the world whose existence was a torture to them; and if this young man chose also to

marry a creature utterly beneath him and to degrade the family, no effort on their part could prevent him. But if, as seemed probable, he were yet free, and if he could be got to come again among them, it might be that he still had left some feelings on which they might work. No doubt there was the Neville obstinacy about him; but he had seemed to both of them to acknowledge the sanctity of his family, and to appreciate in some degree the duty which he owed to it.

The emergency was so great that she feared to act alone. She told everything to her husband, shewing him Lady Mary's letter, and the effect upon him was so great that it made him ill. "It will be better for me," he said, "to turn my face to the wall and die before I know it." He took to his bed, and they of his household did think that he would die. He hardly spoke except to his wife, and when alone with her did not cease to moan over the destruction which had come upon the house. "If it



“could only have been the other brother,” said Lady Scroope.

“There can be no change,” said the Earl. “He must do as it lists him with the fortune and the name and the honours of the family.”

Then on one morning there was a worse bulletin than heretofore given by the doctor, and Lady Scroope at once sent off the letter which was to recall the nephew to his uncle’s bedside. The letter, as we have seen, was successful, and Fred, who caused himself to be carried over from Dorchester to Scroope as fast as post-horses could be made to gallop, almost expected to be told on his arrival that his uncle had departed to his rest. In the hall he encountered Mrs. Bunce the housekeeper. “We think my lord is a little better,” said Mrs. Bunce almost in a whisper. “My lord took a little broth in the middle of the day, and we believe he has slept since.” Then he passed on and found his aunt in the small sitting-room. His uncle had rallied a little, she told him.

She was very affectionate in her manner, and thanked him warmly for his alacrity in coming. When he was told that his uncle would postpone his visit till the next morning he almost began to think that he had been fussy in traveling so quickly.

That evening he dined alone with his aunt, and the conversation during dinner and as they sat for a few minutes after dinner had reference solely to his uncle's health. But, though they were alone on this evening, he was surprised to find that Sophie Mellerby was again at Scroope. Lady Sophia and Mr. Mellerby were up in London, but Sophie was not to join them till May. As it happened, however, she was dining at the parsonage this evening. She must have been in the house when Neville arrived, but he had not seen her. "Is she going to live 'here?'" he asked, almost irreverently, when he was first told that she was in the house. "I wish she were," said Lady Scroope. "I am childless, and she is as dear to me as a

“daughter.” Then Fred apologized, and expressed himself as quite willing that Sophie Mellerby should live and die at Scroope.

The evening was dreadfully dull. It had seemed to him that the house was darker, and gloomier, and more comfortless than ever. He had hurried over to see a dying man, and now there was nothing for him to do but to kick his heels. But before he went to bed his ennui was dissipated by a full explanation of all his aunt’s terrors. She crept down to him at about nine, and having commenced her story by saying that she had a matter of most vital importance on which to speak to him, she told him in fact all that she had heard from Lady Mary.

“She is a mischief-making gossiping old maid,” said Neville angrily.

“Will you tell me that there is no truth in what she writes?” asked Lady Scroope. But this was a question which Fred Neville was not prepared to answer, and he sat silent. “Fred, tell me the truth. Are you married?”

“No ;—I am not married.”

“I know that you will not condescend to an  
“untruth.”

“If so, my word must be sufficient.”

But it was not sufficient. She longed to extract from him some repeated and prolonged assurance which might bring satisfaction to her own mind. “I am glad, at any rate, to hear  
“that there is no truth in that suspicion.” To this he would not condescend to reply, but sat glowering at her as though in wrath that any question should be asked him about his private concerns. “You must feel, Fred, for your  
“uncle in such a matter. You must know how  
“important this is to him. You have heard  
“what he has already suffered ; and you must  
“know too that he has endeavoured to be very  
“good to you.”

“I do know that he has,—been very good  
“to me.”

“Perhaps you are angry with me for inter-  
“fering.” He would not deny that he was

angry. "I should not do so were it not that  
"your uncle is ill and suffering."

"You have asked me a question and I have  
"answered it. I do not know what more you  
"want of me."

"Will you say that there is no truth in all  
"this that Lady Mary says?"

"Lady Mary is an impertinent old maid."

"If you were in your uncle's place, and if you  
"had an heir as to whose character in the  
"world you were anxious, you would not think  
"anyone impertinent, who endeavoured for the  
"sake of friendship, to save your name and  
"family from a disreputable connexion."

"I have made no disreputable connexion.  
"I will not allow the word disreputable to  
"be used in regard to any of my friends."

"You do know people of the name of  
"O'Hara?"

"Of course I do."

"And there is a—young lady?"

"I may know a dozen young ladies as to

“whom I shall not choose to consult Lady Mary  
“Quin.”

“You understand what I mean, Fred. Of  
“course I do not wish to ask you anything  
“about your general acquaintances. No doubt  
“you meet many girls whom you admire, and  
“I should be very foolish were I to make  
“inquiries of you or of anybody else concerning  
“them. I am the last person to be so injudi-  
“cious. If you will tell me that there is not  
“and never shall be any question of marriage  
“between you and Miss O’Hara, I will not say  
“another word.”

“I will not pledge myself to anything for the  
“future.”

“You told your uncle you would never make  
“a marriage that should be disgraceful to the  
“position which you will be called upon to  
“fill.”

“Nor will I.”

“But would not this marriage be disgraceful,  
“even were the young lady ever so estimable?”



“How are the old families of the country to  
“be kept up, and the old blood maintained if  
“young men, such as you are, will not remem-  
“ber something of all that is due to the name  
“which they bear.”

“I do not know that I have forgotten any-  
“thing.”

Then she paused before she could summon  
courage to ask him another question. “You  
“have made no promise of marriage to Miss  
“O’Hara?” He sat dumb, but still looking  
at her with that angry frown. “Surely your  
“uncle has a right to expect that you will answer  
“that question.”

“I am quite sure that for his sake it will be  
“much better that no such questions shall be  
“asked me.”

In point of fact he had answered the question.  
When he would not deny that such promise  
had been made, there could no longer be any  
doubt of the truth of what Lady Mary had  
written. Of course the whole truth had now

been elicited. He was not married but he was engaged;—engaged to a girl of whom he knew nothing, a Roman Catholic, Irish, fatherless, almost nameless,—to one who had never been seen in good society, one of whom no description could be given, of whom no record could be made in the peerage that would not be altogether disgraceful, a girl of whom he was ashamed to speak before those to whom he owed duty and submission!

That there might be a way to escape the evil even yet Lady Scroope acknowledged to herself fully. Many men promise marriage but do not keep the promise they have made. This lady, who herself was really good,—unselfish, affectionate, religious, actuated by a sense of duty in all that she did, whose life had been almost austere moral, entertained an idea that young men, such as Fred Neville, very commonly made such promises with very little thought of keeping them. She did not expect young men to be governed by principles such as those to which

young ladies are bound to submit themselves. She almost supposed that heaven had a different code of laws for men and women in her condition of life, and that salvation was offered on very different terms to the two sexes. The breach of any such promise as the heir of Scroope could have made to such a girl as this Miss O'Hara would be a perjury at which Jove might certainly be expected to laugh. But in her catalogue there were sins for which no young men could hope to be forgiven; and the sin of such a marriage as this would certainly be beyond pardon.

Of the injury which was to be done to Miss O'Hara, it may be said with certainty that she thought not at all. In her eyes it would be no injury, but simple justice,—no more than a proper punishment for intrigue and wicked ambition. Without having seen the enemy to the family of Scroope, or even having heard a word to her disparagement, she could feel sure that the girl was bad,—that these O'Haras

were vulgar and false impostors, persons against whom she could put out all her strength without any prick of conscience. Women in such matters are always hard against women, and especially hard against those whom they believe to belong to a class below their own. Certainly no feeling of mercy would induce her to hold her hand in this task of saving her husband's nephew from an ill-assorted marriage. Mercy to Miss O'Hara! Lady Scroope had the name of being a very charitable woman. She gave away money. She visited the poor. She had laboured hard to make the cottages on the estate clean and comfortable. She denied herself many things that she might give to others. But she would have no more mercy on such a one as Miss O'Hara, than a farmer's labourer would have on a rat!

There was nothing more now to be said to the heir;—nothing more for the present that could serve the purpose which she had in hand. “Your uncle is very ill,” she murmured.

“I was so sorry to hear it.”

“We hope now that he may recover. For the last two days the doctor has told us that we may hope.”

“I am so glad to find that it is so.”

“I am sure you are. You will see him to-morrow after breakfast. He is most anxious to see you. I think sometimes you hardly reflect how much you are to him.”

“I don't know why you should say so.”

“You had better not speak to him to-morrow about this affair,—of the Irish young lady.”

“Certainly not,—unless he speaks to me about it.”

“He is hardly strong enough yet. But no doubt he will do so before you leave us. I hope it may be long before you do that.”

“It can't be very long, Aunt Mary.” To this she said nothing, but bade him good-night and he was left alone. It was now past ten, and he supposed that Miss Mellerby had come in and gone to her room. Why she should

avoid him in this way he could not understand. But as for Miss Mellerby herself, she was so little to him that he cared not at all whether he did or did not see her. All his brightest thoughts were away in County Clare, on the cliffs overlooking the Atlantic. They might say what they liked to him, but he would never be untrue to the girl whom he had left there. His aunt had spoken of the "affair of—the Irish young lady;" and he had quite understood the sneer with which she had mentioned Kate's nationality. Why should not an Irish girl be as good as any English girl? Of one thing he was quite sure,—that there was much more of real life to be found on the cliffs of Moher than in the gloomy chambers of Scroope Manor.

He got up from his seat feeling absolutely at a loss how to employ himself. Of course he could go to bed, but how terribly dull must life be in a place in which he was obliged to go to bed at ten o'clock because there was nothing to



do. And since he had been there his only occupation had been that of listening to his aunt's sermons. He began to think that a man might pay too dearly even for being the heir to Scroope. After sitting awhile in the dark gloom created by a pair of candles, he got up and wandered into the large unused dining-room of the mansion. It was a chamber over forty feet long, with dark flock paper and dark curtains, with dark painted wainscoating below the paper, and huge dark mahogany furniture. On the walls hung the portraits of the Scroopes for many generations past, some in armour, some in their robes of state, ladies with stiff bodices and high head-dresses, not beauties by Lely or warriors and statesmen by Kneller, but wooden, stiff, ungainly, hideous figures, by artists whose works had, unfortunately, been more enduring than their names. He was pacing up and down the room with a candle in his hand, trying to realize to himself what life at Scroope might be with a wife of his aunt's

choosing, and his aunt to keep the house for them, when a door was opened at the end of the room, away from that by which he had entered, and with a soft noiseless step Miss Mellerby entered. She did not see him at first, as the light of her own candle was in her eyes, and she was startled when he spoke to her. His first idea was one of surprise that she should be wandering about the house alone at night. "Oh, Mr. Neville," she said, "you quite took me by surprise. How do you do? I did not expect to meet you here."

"Nor I you!"

"Since Lord Scroope has been so ill, Lady Scroope has been sleeping in the little room next to his, downstairs, and I have just come from her."

"What do you think of my uncle's state?"

"He is better; but he is very weak."

"You see him?"

"Oh yes, daily. He is so anxious to see you, Mr. Neville, and so much obliged to

“you for coming. I was sure that you would  
“come.”

“Of course I came.”

“He wanted to see you this afternoon; but  
“the doctor had expressly ordered that he  
“should be kept quiet. Good-night. I am so  
“very glad that you are here. I am sure that  
“you will be good to him.”

Why should she be glad, and why should she  
be sure that he would be good to his uncle?  
Could it be that she also had been told the  
story of Kate O'Hara? Then, as no other  
occupation was possible to him, he took himself  
to bed.

## CHAPTER X.

### FRED NEVILLE'S SCHEME.

ON the next morning after breakfast Neville was taken into his uncle's chamber, but there was an understanding that there was to be no conversation on disagreeable subjects on this occasion. His aunt remained in the room while he was there, and the conversation was almost confined to the expression of thanks on the part of the Earl to his nephew for coming, and of hopes on the part of the nephew that his uncle might soon be well. One matter was mooted as to which no doubt much would be said before Neville could get away. "I thought "it better to make arrangements to stay a fortnight," said Fred,—as though a fortnight were a very long time indeed.

“A fortnight!” said the Earl.

“We won’t talk of his going yet,” replied Lady Scroope.

“Supposing I had died, he could not have “gone back in a fortnight,” said the Earl in a low moaning voice.

“My dear uncle, I hope that I may live to “see you in your own place here at Scroope for “many years to come.” The Earl shook his head, but nothing more was then said on that subject. Fred, however, had carried out his purpose. He had been determined to let them understand that he would not hold himself bound to remain long at Scroope Manor.

Then he wrote a letter to his own Kate. It was the first time he had addressed her in this fashion, and though he was somewhat of a gallant gay Lothario, the writing of the letter was an excitement to him. If so, what must the receipt of it have been to Kate O’Hara! He had promised her that he would write to her, and from the moment that he was gone

she was anxious to send in to the post-office at Ennistimon for the treasure which the mail car might bring to her. When she did get it, it was indeed a treasure. To a girl who really loves, the first love letter is a thing as holy as the recollection of the first kiss. "May I see it, Kate?" said Mrs. O'Hara, as her daughter sat poring over the scrap of paper by the window.

"Yes, mamma,—if you please." Then she paused a moment. "But I think that I had rather you did not. Perhaps he did not mean me to shew it." The mother did not urge her request, but contented herself with coming up behind her child and kissing her. The reader, however, shall have the privilege which was denied to Mrs. O'Hara.

"DEAREST KATE,

"I got here all alive yesterday at four. I came on as fast as ever I could travel, and hardly got a mouthful to eat after I left



“Limerick. I never saw such beastliness as  
“they have at the stations. My uncle is much  
“better,—so much so that I shan’t remain here  
“very long. I can’t tell you any particular  
“news,—except this, that that old cat down at  
“Castle Quin,—the one with the crisp-curled  
“wig,—must have the nose of a dog and the  
“ears of a cat and the eyes of a bird, and  
“she sends word to Scroope of everything that  
“she smells and hears and sees. It makes not  
“the slightest difference to me,—nor to you I  
“should think. Only I hate such interfer-  
“ence. The truth is old maids have nothing  
“else to do. If I were you I wouldn’t be an  
“old maid.

“I can’t quite say how long it will be before  
“I am back at Ardkill, but not a day longer  
“than I can help. Address to Scroope, Dorset-  
“shire,—that will be enough ;—to F. Neville,  
“Esq. Give my love to your mother.—As for  
“yourself, dear Kate, if you care for my love,  
“you may weigh mine for your own dear self

“with your own weights and measures. Indeed  
“you have all my heart.

“Your own F. N.

“There is a young lady here whom it is  
“intended that I shall marry. She is the pink  
“of propriety and really very pretty;—but you  
“need not be a bit jealous. The joke is that  
“my brother is furiously in love with her, and  
“that I fancy she would be just as much in love  
“with him only that she’s told not to.—A  
“thousand kisses.”

It was not much of a love letter, but there were a few words in it which sufficed altogether for Kate’s happiness. She was told that she had all his heart,—and she believed it. She was told that she need not be jealous of the proper young lady, and she believed that too. He sent her a thousand kisses; and she, thinking that he might have kissed the paper, pressed it to her lips. At any rate his hand had rested

on it. She would have been quite willing to shew to her mother all these expressions of her lover's love; but she felt that it would not be fair to him to expose his allusions to the "beastliness" at the stations. He might say what he liked to her; but she understood that she was not at liberty to shew to others words which had been addressed to her in the freedom of perfect intimacy.

"Does he say anything of the old man?" asked Mrs. O'Hara.

"He says that his uncle is better."

"Threatened folks live long. Does Neville tell you when he will be back?"

"Not exactly; but he says that he will not stay long. He does not like Scroope at all. I knew that. He always says that,—that—."

"Says what, dear?"

"When we are married he will go away somewhere,—to Italy or Greece or somewhere. Scroope he says is so gloomy."

"And where shall I go?"

“Oh, mother ;—you shall be with us, always.”

“No, dear, you must not dream of that. When you have him you will not want me.”

“Dear mother. I shall want you always.”

“He will not want me. We have no right to expect too much from him, Kate. That he shall make you his wife we have a right to expect. If he were false to you——”

“He is not false. Why should you think him false?”

“I do not think it; but if he were—! Never mind. If he be true to you, I will not burden him. If I can see you happy, Kate, I will bear all the rest.” That which she would have to bear would be utter solitude for life. She could look forward and see how black and tedious would be her days; but all that would be nothing to her if her child were lifted up on high.

It was now the beginning of April, which for sportsmen in England is of all seasons the most

desperate. Hunting is over. There is literally nothing to shoot. And fishing,—even if there were fishing in England worth a man's time,—has not begun. A gentleman of enterprise driven very hard in this respect used to declare that there was no remedy for April but to go and fly hawks in Holland. Fred Neville could not fly hawks at Scroope, and found that there was nothing for him to do. Miss Mellerby suggested—books. “I like books better than anything,” said Fred. “I always have a lot of novels down at our quarters. But a fellow can't be reading all day, and there isn't a novel in the house except Walter Scott's and a lot of old rubbish. By-the-bye have you read ‘All isn't Gold that Glitters?’” Miss Mellerby had not read the tale named. “That's what I call a good novel.”

Day passed after day and it seemed as though he was expected to remain at Scroope without any definite purpose, and, worse still, without any fixed limit to his visit. At his aunt's insti-

gation he rode about the property and asked questions as to the tenants. It was all to be his own, and in the course of nature must be his own very soon. There could not but be an interest for him in every cottage and every field. But yet there was present to him all the time a schoolboy feeling that he was doing a task ; and the occupation was not pleasant to him because it was a task. The steward was with him as a kind of pedagogue, and continued to instruct him during the whole ride. This man only paid so much a year, and the rent ought to be so much more ; but there were circumstances. And "My Lord" had been peculiarly good. This farm was supposed to be the best on the estate, and that other the worst. Oh yes, there were plenty of foxes. "My Lord" had always insisted that the foxes should be preserved. Some of the hunting gentry no doubt had made complaints, but it was a great shame. Foxes had been seen, two or three at a time, the very day after the coverts had been drawn



blank. As for game, a head of game could be got up very soon, as there was plenty of corn and the woods were large; but "My Lord" had never cared for game. The farmers all shot the rabbits on their own land. Rents were paid to the day. There was never any mistake about that. Of course the land would require to be re-valued, but "My Lord" wouldn't hear of such a thing being done in his time. The Manor wood wanted thinning very badly. The wood had been a good deal neglected. "My Lord" had never liked to hear the axe going. That was Grumby Green and the boundary of the estate in that direction. The next farm was college property, and was rented five shillings an acre dearer than "My Lord's" land. If Mr. Neville wished it the steward would show him the limit of the estate on the other side to-morrow. No doubt there was a plan of the estate. It was in "My Lord's" own room, and would shew every farm with its acreage and bounds. Fred thought that he

would study this plan on the next day instead of riding about with the steward.

He could not escape from the feeling that he was being taught his lesson like a school-boy, and he did not like it. He longed for the freedom of his boat on the Irish coast, and longed for the devotedness of Kate O'Hara. He was sure that he loved her so thoroughly that life without her was not to be regarded as possible. But certain vague ideas very injurious to the Kate he so dearly loved crossed his brain. Under the constant teaching of his aunt he did recognize it as a fact that he owed a high duty to his family. For many days after that first night at Scroope not a word was said to him about Kate O'Hara. He saw his uncle daily,—probably twice a day; but the Earl never alluded to his Irish love. Lady Scroope spoke constantly of the greatness of the position which the heir was called upon to fill and of all that was due to the honour of the family. Fred, as he heard her, would shake his head impatiently,

but would acknowledge the truth of what she said. He was induced even to repeat the promise which he had made to his uncle, and to assure his aunt that he would do nothing to mar or lessen the dignity of the name of Neville. He did become, within his own mind, indoctrinated with the idea that he would injure the position of the earldom which was to be his were he to marry Kate O'Hara. Arguments which had appeared to him to be absurd when treated with ridicule by Father Marty, and which in regard to his own conduct he had determined to treat as old women's tales, seemed to him at Scroope to be true and binding. The atmosphere of the place, the companionship of Miss Mellerby, the reverence with which he himself was treated by the domestics, the signs of high nobility which surrounded him on all sides, had their effect upon him. Noblesse oblige. He felt that it was so. Then there crossed his brain visions of a future life which were injurious to the girl he loved.

Let his brother Jack come and live at Scroope and marry Sophie Mellerby. As long as he lived Jack could not be the Earl, but in regard to money he would willingly make such arrangements as would enable his brother to maintain the dignity and state of the house. They would divide the income. And then he would so arrange his matters with Kate O'Hara that his brother's son should be heir to the Earldom. He had some glimmering of an idea that as Kate was a Roman Catholic a marriage ceremony might be contrived of which this would become the necessary result. There should be no deceit. Kate should know it all, and everything should be done to make her happy. He would live abroad, and would not call himself by his title. They would be Mr. and Mrs. Neville. As to the property that must of course hereafter go with the title, but in giving up so much to his brother, he could of course arrange as to the provision necessary for any children of his own. No doubt his Kate

would like to be the Countess Scroope,—would prefer that a future son of her own should be the future Earl. But as he was ready to abandon so much, surely she would be ready to abandon something. He must explain to her,—and to her mother,—that under no other circumstances could he marry her. He must tell her of pledges made to his uncle before he knew her, of the duty which he owed to his family, and of his own great dislike to the kind of life which would await him as acting head of the family. No doubt there would be scenes,—and his heart quailed as he remembered certain glances which had flashed upon him from the eyes of Mrs. O'Hara. But was he not offering to give up everything for his love? His Kate should be his wife after some Roman Catholic fashion in some Roman Catholic country. Of course there would be difficulties,—the least of which would not be those glances from the angry mother; but it would be his business to overcome difficulties. There were always

difficulties in the way of any man who chose to leave the common grooves of life and to make a separate way for himself. There were always difficulties in the way of adventures. Dear Kate! He would never desert his Kate. But his Kate must do as much as this for him. Did he not intend that, whatever good things the world might have in store for him, his Kate should share them all?

His ideas were very hazy, and he knew himself that he was ignorant of the laws respecting marriage. It occurred to him, therefore, that he had better consult his brother, and confide everything to him. That Jack was wiser than he, he was always willing to allow; and although he did in some sort look down upon Jack as a plodding fellow, who shot no seals and cared nothing for adventure, still he felt it to be almost a pity that Jack should not be the future Earl. So he told his aunt that he proposed to ask his brother to come to Scroope for a day or two before he returned to Ireland. Had his



aunt, or would his uncle have, any objection? Lady Scroope did not dare to object. She by no means wished that her younger nephew should again be brought within the influence of Miss Mellerby's charms; but it would not suit her purpose to give offence to the heir by refusing so reasonable request. He would have been off to join his brother at Woolwich immediately. So the invitation was sent, and Jack Neville promised that he would come.

Fred knew nothing of the offer that had been made to Miss Mellerby, though he had been sharp enough to discern his brother's feelings. "My brother is coming here to-morrow," he said one morning to Miss Mellerby when they were alone together.

"So Lady Scroope has told me. I don't wonder that you should wish to see him."

"I hope everybody will be glad to see him. Jack is just about the very best fellow in the world;—and he's one of the cleverest  
"too."

“It is so nice to hear one brother speak in that way of another.”

“I swear by Jack. He ought to have been the elder brother;—that’s the truth. Don’t you like him?”

“Who;—I. Oh, yes, indeed. What I saw of him I liked very much.”

“Isn’t it a pity that he shouldn’t have been the elder?”

“I can’t say that, Mr. Neville.”

“No. It wouldn’t be just civil to me. But I can say it. When we were here last winter I thought that my brother was—”

“Was what, Mr. Neville?”

“Was getting to be very fond of you. Perhaps I ought not to say so.”

“I don’t think that much good is ever done by saying that kind of thing,” said Miss Mellerby gravely.

“It cannot at any rate do any harm in this case. I wish with all my heart that he was fond of you and you of him.”

“That is all nonsense. Indeed it is.”

“I am not saying it without an object. I  
“don’t see why you and I should not under-  
“stand one another. If I tell you a secret will  
“you keep it?”

“Do not tell me any secret that I must keep  
“from Lady Scroope.”

“But that is just what you must do.”

“But then suppose I don’t do it,” said Miss  
Mellerby.

But Fred was determined to tell his secret.  
“The truth is that both my uncle and my aunt  
“want me to fall in love with you.”

“How very kind of them,” said she with a  
little forced laugh.

“I don’t for a moment think that, had I  
“tried it on ever so, I could have succeeded.  
“I am not at all the sort of man to be con-  
“ceited in that way. Wishing to do the best  
“they could for me, they picked you out. It  
“isn’t that I don’t think as well of you as they  
“do, but——”

“ Really, Mr. Neville, this is the oddest conversation.”

“ Quite true. It is odd. But the fact is you are here, and there is nobody else I can talk to. And I want you to know the exact truth. I’m engaged to—somebody else.”

“ I ought to break my heart;—oughtn’t I ? ”

“ I don’t in the least mind your laughing at me. I should have minded it very much if I had asked you to marry me, and you had refused me.”

“ You haven’t given me the chance, you see.”

“ I didn’t mean. What was the good ? ”

“ Certainly not, Mr. Neville, if you are engaged to some one else. I shouldn’t like to be Number Two.”

“ I’m in a peck of troubles;—that’s the truth. I would change places with my brother to-morrow if I could. I daresay you don’t believe that, but I would. I will not vex my uncle if I can help it, but I certainly shall not throw over the girl who loves me. If it wasn’t

“ for the title, I’d give up Scroope to my brother  
“ to-morrow, and go and live in some place  
“ where I could get lots of shooting, and where  
“ I should never have to put on a white choker.”

“ You’ll think better of all that.”

“ Well!—I’ve just told you everything be-  
“ cause I like to be on the square. I wish you  
“ knew Kate O’Hara. I’m sure you would not  
“ wonder that a fellow should love her. I had  
“ rather you didn’t tell my aunt what I have  
“ told you ; but if you choose to do so, I can’t  
“ help it.”

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE WISDOM OF JACK NEVILLE.

NEVILLE had been forced to get his leave of absence renewed on the score of his uncle's health, and had promised to prolong his absence till the end of April. When doing so he had declared his intention of returning to Ennis in the beginning of May ; but no agreement to that had as yet been expressed by his uncle or aunt. Towards the end of the month his brother came to Scroope, and up to that time not a word further had been said to him respecting Kate O'Hara.

He had received an answer from Kate to his letter, prepared in a fashion very different from that of his own. He had seated himself at a table and in compliance with the pledge given



by him, had scrawled off his epistle as fast as he could write it. She had taken a whole morning to think of hers, and had re-copied it after composing it, and had then read it with the utmost care, confessing to herself, almost with tears, that it was altogether unworthy of him to whom it was to be sent. It was the first love letter she had ever written,—probably the first letter she had ever written to a man, except those short notes which she would occasionally scrawl to Father Marty in compliance with her mother's directions. The letter to Fred was as follows ;—

“ ARDKILL COTTAGE,  
“ 10th April, 18—.

“ MY DEAREST FRED,

“ I received your dear letter three or  
“ four days ago, and it made me so happy.  
“ We were sorry that you should have such an  
“ uncomfortable journey; but all that would be  
“ over and soon forgotten when you found your-  
“ self in your comfortable home and among your

“ own friends. I am very glad to hear that  
“ your uncle is better. The thought of finding  
“ him so ill must have made your journey very  
“ sad. As he is so much better, I suppose you  
“ will come back soon to your poor little Kate.

“ There is no news at all to send you from  
“ Liscannor. Father Marty was up here yester-  
“ day and says that your boat is all safe at  
“ Lahinch. He says that Barney Morony is an  
“ idle fellow, but as he has nothing to do he  
“ can't help being idle. You should come back  
“ and not let him be idle any more. I think  
“ the sea gulls know that you are away, because  
“ they are wheeling and screaming about louder  
“ and bolder than ever.

“ Mother sends her best love. She is very  
“ well. We have had nothing to eat since you  
“ went because it has been Lent. So, if you  
“ had been here, you would not have been  
“ able to get a bit of luncheon. I dare say you  
“ have been a great deal better off at Scroope.  
“ Father Marty says that you Protestants will

“ have to keep your Lent hereafter,—eighty  
 “ days at a time instead of forty ; and that we  
 “ Catholics will be allowed to eat just what we  
 “ like, while you Protestants will have to look  
 “ on at us. If so, I think I’ll manage to give  
 “ you a little bit.

“ Do come back to your own Kate as soon as  
 “ you can. I need not tell you that I love you  
 “ better than all the world because you know it  
 “ already. I am not a bit jealous of the proper  
 “ young lady, and I hope that she will fall in  
 “ love with your brother. Then some day we  
 “ shall be sisters ;—shan’t we ? I should like to  
 “ have a proper young lady for my sister so  
 “ much. Only, perhaps she would despise me.  
 “ Do come back soon. Everything is so dull  
 “ while you are away ! You would come back  
 “ to your own Kate if you knew how great a  
 “ joy it is to her when she sees you coming  
 “ along the cliff.

“ Dearest, dearest love, I am always your  
 “ own, own  
 “ KATE O’HARA.”

Neville thought of shewing Kate's letter to Miss Mellerby, but when he read it a second time he made up his mind that he would keep it to himself. The letter was all very well, and, as regarded the expressions towards himself, just what it should be. But he felt that it was not such a letter as Miss Mellerby would have written herself, and he was a little ashamed of all that was said about the priest. Neither was he proud of the pretty, finished, French hand-writing, over every letter of which his love had taken so much pains. In truth, Kate O'Hara was better educated than himself, and perhaps knew as much as Sophie Mellerby. She could have written her letter quite as well in French as in English, and she did understand something of the formation of her sentences. Fred Neville had been at an excellent school, but it may be doubted whether he could have explained his own written language. Nevertheless he was a little ashamed of his Kate, and thought that

Miss Mellerby might perceive her ignorance if he shewed her letter.

He had sent for his brother in order that he might explain his scheme and get his brother's advice;—but he found it very difficult to explain his scheme to Jack Neville. Jack, indeed, from the very first would not allow that the scheme was in any way practicable. “I don't quite understand, Fred, what you mean. You don't intend to deceive her by a false marriage?”

“Most assuredly not. I do not intend to deceive her at all.”

“You must make her your wife, or not make her your wife.”

“Undoubtedly she will be my wife. I am quite determined about that. She has my word,—and over and above that, she is dearer to me than anything else.”

“If you marry her, her eldest son must of course be the heir to the title.”

“I am not at all so sure of that. All manner

“of queer things may be arranged by marriages  
“with Roman Catholics.”

“Put that out of your head,” said Jack  
Neville. “In the first place you would cer-  
“tainly find yourself in a mess, and in the next  
“place the attempt itself would be dishonest.  
“I dare say men have crept out of marriages  
“because they have been illegal; but a man  
“who arranges a marriage with the intention  
“of creeping out of it is a scoundrel.”

“You needn’t bully about it, Jack. You  
“know very well that I don’t mean to creep  
“out of anything.”

“I’m sure you don’t. But as you ask me I  
“must tell you what I think. You are in a  
“sort of dilemma between this girl and Uncle  
“Scroope.”

“I’m not in any dilemma at all.”

“You seem to think you have made some  
“promise to him which will be broken if you  
“marry her;—and I suppose you certainly have  
“made her a promise.”



“Which I certainly mean to keep,” said Fred.

“All right. Then you must break your promise to Uncle Scroope.”

“It was a sort of half and half promise. I could not bear to see him making himself unhappy about it.”

“Just so. I suppose Miss O’Hara can wait.”

Fred Neville scratched his head. “Oh yes; —she can wait. There’s nothing to bind me to a day or a month. But my uncle may live for the next ten years now.”

“My advice to you is to let Miss O’Hara understand clearly that you will make no other engagement, but that you cannot marry her as long as your uncle lives. Of course I say this on the supposition that the affair cannot be broken off.”

“Certainly not,” said Fred with a decision that was magnanimous.

“I cannot think the engagement a fortunate one for you in your position. Like should

“marry like. I’m quite sure of that. You  
“would wish your wife to be easily intimate  
“with the sort of people among whom she would  
“naturally be thrown as Lady Scroope,—among  
“the wives and daughters of other Earls and  
“such like.”

“No ; I shouldn’t.”

“I don’t see how she would be comfortable  
“in any other way.”

“I should never live among other Earls, as  
“you call them. I hate that kind of thing. I  
“hate London. I should never live here.”

“What would you do ?”

“I should have a yacht, and live chiefly in  
“that. I should go about a good deal, and get  
“into all manner of queer places. I don’t say  
“but what I might spend a winter now and  
“then in Leicestershire or Northamptonshire,  
“for I am fond of hunting. But I should have  
“no regular home. According to my scheme  
“you should have this place,—and sufficient of  
“the income to maintain it of course.”

“That wouldn’t do, Fred,” said Jack, shaking his head,—“though I know how generous you  
“are.”

“Why wouldn’t it do?”

“You are the heir, and you must take the  
“duties with the privileges. You can have  
“your yacht if you like a yacht,—but you’ll  
“soon get tired of that kind of life. I take it  
“that a yacht is a bad place for a nursery, and  
“inconvenient for one’s old boots. When a man  
“has a home fixed for him by circumstances,—  
“as you will have,—he gravitates towards it,  
“let his own supposed predilections be what  
“they may. Circumstances are stronger than  
“predilections.”

“You’re a philosopher.”

“I was always more sober than you, Fred.”

“I wish you had been the elder,—on the con-  
“dition of the younger brother having a tidy  
“slice out of the property to make himself  
“comfortable.”

“But I am not the elder, and you must take

“ the position with all the encumbrances. I see  
“ nothing for it but to ask Miss O’Hara to wait.  
“ If my uncle lives long the probability is that  
“ one or the other of you will change your  
“ minds, and that the affair will never come  
“ off.”

When the younger and wiser brother gave this advice he did not think it all likely that Miss O’Hara would change her mind. Penniless young ladies don’t often change their minds when they are engaged to the heirs of Earls. It was not at all probable that she should repent the bargain that she had made. But Jack Neville did think it very probable that his brother might do so;—and, indeed, felt sure that he would do so if years were allowed to intervene. His residence in County Clare would not be perpetual, and with him in his circumstances it might well be that the young lady, being out of sight, should be out of mind. Jack could not exactly declare his opinion on this head. His brother at present was full of his

promise, full of his love, full of his honour. Nor would Jack have absolutely counselled him to break his word to the young lady. But he thought it probable that in the event of delay poor Miss O'Hara might go to the wall;—and he also thought that for the general interests of the Scroope family it would be better that she should do so.

“And what are you going to do yourself?” asked Fred.

“In respect of what?”

“In respect of Miss Mellerby?”

“In respect of Miss Mellerby I am not going to do anything,” said Jack as he walked away.

In all that the younger brother said to the elder as to poor Kate O'Hara he was no doubt wise and prudent; but in what he said about himself he did not tell the truth. But then the question asked was one which a man is hardly bound to answer, even to a brother. Jack Neville was much less likely to talk about his love affairs than Fred, but not on that account

less likely to think about them. Sophie Mellerby had refused him once, but young ladies have been known to marry gentlemen after refusing them more than once. He at any rate was determined to persevere, having in himself and in his affairs that silent faith of which the possessor is so often unconscious, but which so generally leads to success. He found Miss Mellerby to be very courteous to him if not gracious; and he had the advantage of not being afraid of her. It did not strike him that because she was the granddaughter of a duke, and because he was a younger son, that therefore he ought not to dare to look at her. He understood very well that she was brought there that Fred might marry her;—but Fred was intent on marrying some one else, and Sophie Mellerby was not a girl to throw her heart away upon a man who did not want it. He had come to Scroope for only three days, but, in spite of some watchfulness on the part of the Countess, he found his opportunity for speaking before



he left the house. "Miss Mellerby," he said, "I don't know whether I ought to thank Fortune or to upbraid her for having again brought me face to face with you."

"I hope the evil is not so oppressive as to make you very loud in your upbraidings."

"They shall not at any rate be heard. I don't know whether there was any spice of malice about my brother when he asked me to come here, and told me in the same letter that you were at Scroope."

"He must have meant it for malice, I should think," said the young lady, endeavouring, but not quite successfully, to imitate the manner of the man who loved her.

"Of course I came."

"Not on my behalf, I hope, Mr. Neville."

"Altogether on your behalf. Fred's need to see me was not very great, and, as my uncle had not asked me, and as my aunt, I fancy, does not altogether approve of me, I certainly should not have come,—were it not that I

“might find it difficult to get any other opportunity of seeing you.”

“That is hardly fair to Lady Scroope, Mr. Neville.”

“Quite fair, I think. I did not come clandestinely. I am not ashamed of what I am doing,—or of what I am going to do. I may be ashamed of this,—that I should feel my chance of success to be so small. When I was here before I asked you to—allow me to love you. I now ask you again.”

“Allow you !” she said.

“Yes;—allow me. I should be too bold were I to ask you to return my love at once. I only ask you to know that because I was repulsed once, I have not given up the pursuit.”

“Mr. Neville, I am sure that my father and mother would not permit it.”

“May I ask your father, Miss Mellerby ?”

“Certainly not,—with my permission.”

“Nevertheless you will not forget that I am suitor for your love ?”

“I will make no promise of anything, Mr. Neville.” Then, fearing that she had encouraged him, she spoke again. “I think you ought to take my answer as final.”

“Miss Mellerby, I shall take no answer as final that is not favourable. Should I indeed hear that you were to be married to another man, that would be final; but that I shall not hear from your own lips. You will say good-bye to me,” and he offered her his hand.

She gave him her hand;—and he raised it to his lips and kissed it, as men were wont to do in the olden days.

## CHAPTER XII.

### FRED NEVILLE MAKES A PROMISE.

FRED NEVILLE felt that he had not received from his brother the assistance or sympathy which he had required. He had intended to make a very generous offer,—not indeed quite understanding how his offer could be carried out, but still of a nature that should, he thought, have bound his brother to his service. But Jack had simply answered him by sermons;—by sermons and an assurance of the impracticability of his scheme. Nevertheless he was by no means sure that his scheme was impracticable. He was at least sure of this,—that no human power could force him to adopt a mode of life that was distasteful to him. No one could make him marry Sophie Mellerby, or any other

Sophie, and maintain a grand and gloomy house in Dorsetshire, spending his income, not in a manner congenial to him, but in keeping a large retinue of servants and taking what he called the "heavy line" of an English nobleman. The property must be his own,—or at any rate the life use of it. He swore to himself over and over again that nothing should induce him to impoverish the family or to leave the general affairs of the house of Scroope worse than he found them. Much less than half of that which he understood to be the income coming from the estates would suffice for him. But let his uncle or aunt,—or his strait-laced methodical brother, say what they would to him, nothing should induce him to make himself a slave to an earldom.

But yet his mind was much confused and his contentment by no means complete. He knew that there must be a disagreeable scene between himself and his uncle before he returned to Ireland, and he knew also that his uncle could,

if he were so minded, stop his present very liberal allowance altogether. There had been a bargain, no doubt, that he should remain with his regiment for a year, and of that year six months were still unexpired. His uncle could not quarrel with him for going back to Ireland; but what answer should he make when his uncle asked him whether he were engaged to marry Miss O'Hara,—as of course he would ask; and what reply should he make when his uncle would demand of him whether he thought such a marriage fit for a man in his position. He knew that it was not fit. He believed in the title, in the sanctity of the name, in the mysterious grandeur of the family. He did not think that an Earl of Scroope ought to marry a girl of whom nothing whatever was known. The pride of the position stuck to him;—but it irked him to feel that the sacrifices necessary to support that pride should fall on his own shoulders.

One thing was impossible to him. He would



not desert his Kate. But he wished to have his Kate, as a thing apart. If he could have given six months of each year to his Kate, living that yacht-life of which he had spoken, visiting those strange sunny places which his imagination had pictured to him, unshackled by conventionalities, beyond the sound of church bells, unimpeded by any considerations of family, —and then have migrated for the other six months to his earldom and his estates, to his hunting and perhaps to Parliament, leaving his Kate behind him, that would have been perfect. And why not? In the days which must come so soon, he would be his own master. Who could impede his motions or gainsay his will? Then he remembered his Kate's mother, and the glances which would come from the mother's eyes. There might be difficulty even though Scroope were all his own.

He was not a villain;—simply a self-indulgent spoiled young man who had realized to himself no idea of duty in life. He never once told

himself that Kate should be his mistress. In all the pictures which he drew for himself of a future life everything was to be done for her happiness and for her gratification. His yacht should be made a floating bower for her delight. During those six months of the year which, and which only, the provoking circumstances of his position would enable him to devote to joy and love, her will should be his law. He did not think himself to be fickle. He would never want another Kate. He would leave her with sorrow. He would return to her with ecstasy. Everybody around him should treat her with the respect due to an empress. But it would be very expedient that she should be called Mrs. Neville instead of Lady Scroope. Could things not be so arranged for him;—so arranged that he might make a promise to his uncle, and yet be true to his Kate without breaking his promise? That was his scheme. Jack said that his scheme was impracticable. But the difficulties in his way were not, he thought, so much those which Jack

had propounded as the angry eyes of Kate O'Hara's mother.

At last the day was fixed for his departure. The Earl was already so much better as to be able to leave his bedroom. Twice or thrice a day Fred saw his uncle, and there was much said about the affairs of the estate. The heir had taken some trouble, had visited some of the tenants, and had striven to seem interested in the affairs of the property. The Earl could talk for ever about the estate, every field, every fence, almost every tree on which was familiar to him. That his tenants should be easy in their circumstances, a protestant, church-going, rent-paying, people, son following father, and daughters marrying as their mothers had married, unchanging, never sinking an inch in the social scale, or rising,—this was the wish nearest to his heart. Fred was well disposed to talk about the tenants as long as Kate O'Hara was not mentioned. When the Earl would mournfully speak of his own coming death, as an event

which could not now be far distant, Fred with fullest sincerity would promise that his wishes should be observed. No rents should be raised. The axe should be but sparingly used. It seemed to him strange that a man going into eternity should care about this tree or that;—but as far as he was concerned the trees should stand while Nature supported them. No servant should be dismissed. The carriage horses should be allowed to die on the place. The old charities should be maintained. The parson of the parish should always be a welcome guest at the Manor. No promise was difficult for him to make so long as that one question were left untouched.

But when he spoke of the day of his departure as fixed,—as being “the day after to-morrow,”—then he knew that the question must be touched. “I am sorry,—very sorry, that “you must go,” said the Earl.

“You see a man can’t leave the service at a “moment’s notice.”

“I think that we could have got over that,  
“Fred.”

“Perhaps as regards the service we might,  
“but the regiment would think ill of me. You  
“see, so many things depend on a man’s staying  
“or going. The youngsters mayn’t have their  
“money ready. I said I should remain till  
“October.”

“I don’t at all wish to act the tyrant to you.”

“I know that, uncle.”

Then there was a pause. “I haven’t spoken  
“to you yet, Fred, on a matter which has  
“caused me a great deal of uneasiness. When  
“you first came I was not strong enough to  
“allude to it, and I left it to your aunt.”  
Neville knew well what was coming now, and  
was aware that he was moved in a manner that  
hardly became his manhood. “Your aunt tells  
“me that you have got into some trouble with a  
“young lady in the west of Ireland.”

“No trouble, uncle, I hope.”

“Who is she?”

Then there was another pause, but he gave a direct answer to the question. "She is a Miss "O'Hara."

"A Roman Catholic?"

"Yes."

"A girl of whose family you know nothing?"

"I know that she lives with her mother."

"In absolute obscurity,—and poverty?"

"They are not rich," said Fred.

"Do not suppose that I regard poverty as a fault. It is not necessary that you should marry a girl with any fortune."

"I suppose not, Uncle Scroope."

"But I understand that this young lady is quite beneath yourself in life. She lives with her mother in a little cottage, without servants,——"

"There is a servant."

"You know what I mean, Fred. She does not live as ladies live. She is uneducated."

"You are wrong there, my lord. She has been at an excellent school in France."



“you not promise me that you would make no  
“such marriage?”

He was not strong to defend his Kate. Such defence would have been in opposition to his own ideas, in antagonism with the scheme which he had made for himself. He understood, almost as well as did his uncle, that Kate O'Hara ought not to be made Countess of Scroope. He too thought that were she to be presented to the world as the Countess of Scroope, she would disgrace the title. And yet he would not be a villain! And yet he would not give her up! He could only fall back upon his scheme. “Miss O'Hara is as good as gold,” he said; “but I acknowledge that she is not fit to be  
“mistress of this house.”

“Fred,” said the Earl, almost in a passion of affectionate solicitude, “do not go back to  
“Ireland. We will arrange about the regi-  
“ment. No harm shall be done to any one.  
“My health will be your excuse, and the  
“lawyers shall arrange it all.”

“I must go back,” said Neville. Then the Earl fell back in his chair and covered his face with his hands. “I must go back; but I will give you my honour as a gentleman to do nothing that shall distress you.”

“You will not marry her?”

“No.”

“And, oh, Fred, as you value your own soul, do not injure a poor girl so desolate as that. Tell her and tell her mother the honest truth. If there be tears, will not that be better than sorrow, and disgrace, and ruin?” Among evils there must always be a choice; and the Earl thought that a broken promise was the lightest of those evils to a choice among which his nephew had subjected himself.

And so the interview was over, and there had been no quarrel. Fred Neville had given the Earl a positive promise that he would not marry Kate O’Hara,—to whom he had sworn a thousand times that she should be his wife. Such a promise, however,—so he told himself—

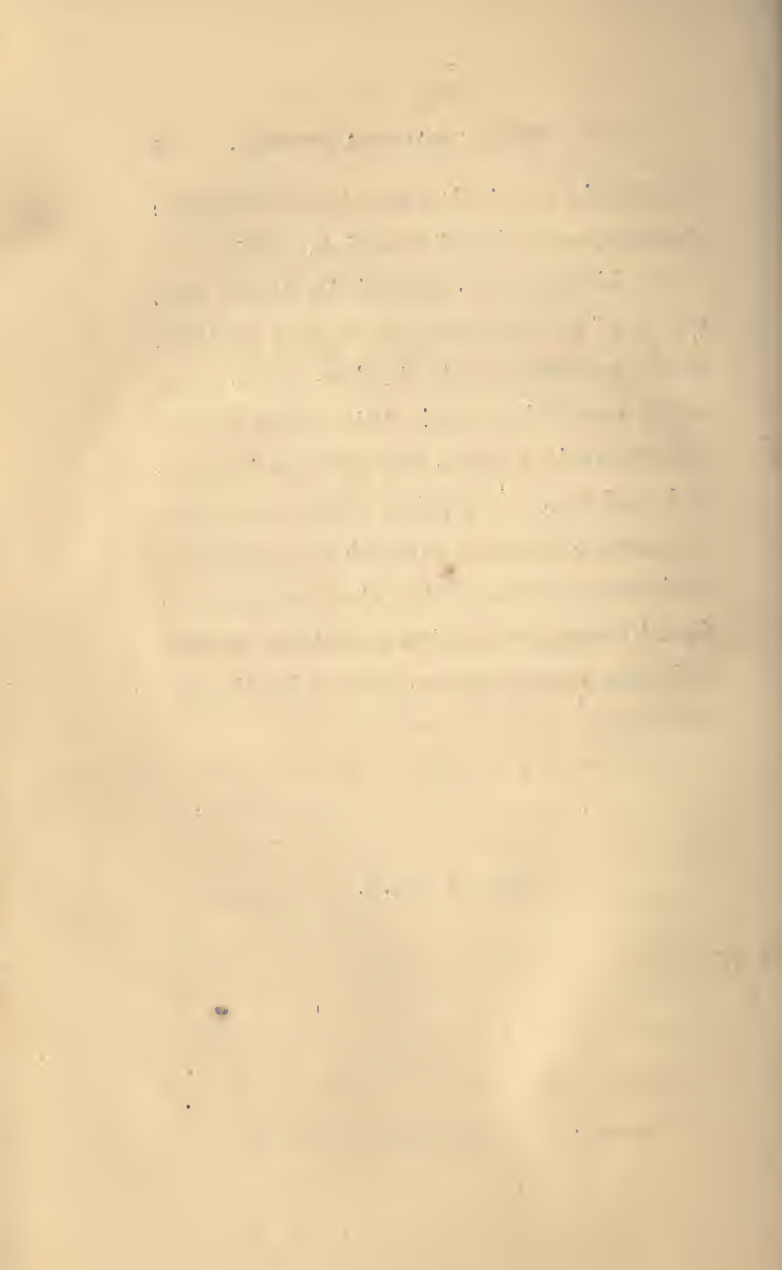
is never intended to prevail beyond the lifetime of the person to whom it is made. He had bound himself not to marry Kate O'Hara while his uncle lived, and that was all.

Or might it not be better to take his uncle's advice altogether and tell the truth,—not to Kate, for that he could not do,—but to Mrs. O'Hara or to Father Marty? As he thought of this he acknowledged to himself that the task of telling such a truth to Mrs. O'Hara would be almost beyond his strength. Could he not throw himself upon the priest's charity, and leave it all to him? Then he thought of his own Kate, and some feeling akin to genuine love told him that he could not part with the girl in such fashion as that. He would break his heart were he to lose his Kate. When he looked at it in that light it seemed to him that Kate was more to him than all the family of the Scroopes with all their glory. Dear, sweet, soft, innocent, beautiful Kate! His Kate who, as he knew well, worshipped the very ground

on which he trod! It was not possible that he should separate himself from Kate O'Hara.

On his return to Ireland he turned that scheme of his over and over again in his head. Surely something might be done if the priest would stand his friend! What, if he were to tell the whole truth to the priest, and ask for such assistance as a priest might give him? But the one assurance to which he came during his journey was this;—that when a man goes in for adventures, he requires a good deal of skill and some courage too to carry him through them.

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